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THE
AGGRESSIVE CHARACTER
OF
CHRISTIANITY.

REV. W. UNSWORTH.

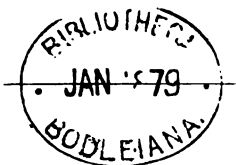


THE
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OF
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THE
AGGRESSIVE CHARACTER
OF
CHRISTIANITY.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM UNSWORTH.
AUTHOR OF 'THE BROTHERHOOD OF MEN,' 'SELF-CULTURE AND SELF-RELIANCE.'



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PREFACE.



HERE is no attempt at verbal criticism, but a simple endeavour to establish the whole case on the leading principles of Scripture. If I have failed in this, I have failed altogether.

No one can be more conscious than I am of the shortcomings of this publication. For many years I have gone over this subject repeatedly, and for two or three years I have waited for leisure, which is never likely to come, that I might examine the most important points with the best critical aids at my command. There appears to be no alternative but publishing in this way, or not at all. I do not write from any personal consideration, except a deep and abiding conviction of duty. Indeed, to be honest, I have had literally to force myself to write.

There are many books already in existence, but not too many, on Church work. Much modern doubt would be completely cured by earnest, Christian toil.

I ask the kind indulgence of the reader, and commend this publication to Him without whose blessing no good can be accomplished.

THE AUTHOR.

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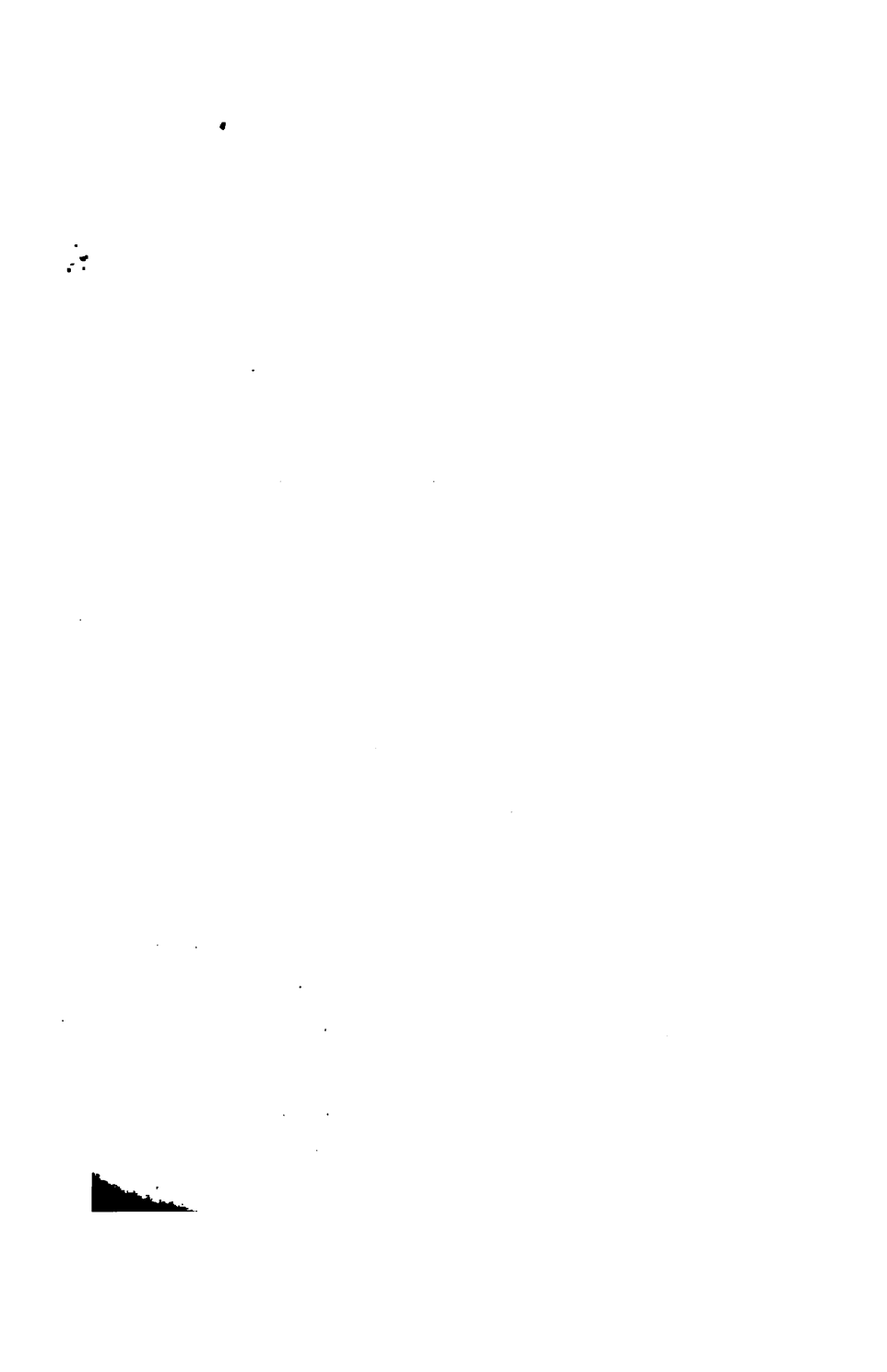
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THE
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Chapter I.

THE THREE DISPENSATIONS; OR, CHRISTIANITY
A RELIGION FOR THE WORLD.

SECTION I.—THE CHURCH PREPARING FOR ITS WORK;
OR, THE PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION.

THE scheme of redemption, like a bright silver chord, runs through the whole Bible. The three Dispensations are not three different religions, but three modes or methods of dispensing the glorious grace of the one religion of God. Christianity, like man, has its birth, its infancy, its youth, and then its full maturity. As in nature things gradually grow to perfection, so it is in reference to the economy of grace. Light increases in the morning till noonday is reached; so it was in the Christian religion. First there was the revelation in Eden, which communicated the grand fact that God meant to redeem the race. Then there was the revelation of the same fact to Abraham, and the call of a single family to preserve the knowledge of that fact. Afterwards there was a larger revelation

made to Moses, and the call of a whole nation to keep alive the knowledge of that revelation for the general benefit of mankind. But the revelation of God's grace culminated in the incarnation and work of Jesus Christ. And so you see a beautiful consistency and harmony in all the workings of God, both in the kingdom of nature and grace; not pushing and hurrying, like a modern man of business, but deliberate, gradual, and slow in His procedure.

Looking with calm and earnest thoughtfulness into the hoary centuries of the past, we get the precious fact that the Patriarchal Dispensation did not hide Christian light. And yet the Patriarchal Church appointed no clear and well-defined system of aggression upon the kingdom of darkness. Properly speaking, the Patriarchal Dispensation was but the dim dawn of Gospel day, the grey twilight of the Christian religion. The sun of Gospel truth had not risen upon the world in his glory and splendour. There were some feeble rays of Divine light shooting up into the heavens, but mostly seen with difficulty, with painful straining of the eyes to catch the purpose of God, as these first rays of Divine light came stealing fitfully over the eastern hills. Though the light was not great, it served to relieve the terrible gloom that had gathered in the moral firmament of our race. Truly 'a dim religious light' it was that shone out upon the world in those dark and distant days, compared with the clear, strong light of later ages; yet we are thankful for the degree of light that God did permit to shine amid the untimely night of man's sad spiritual history. In a most blessed moral sense He said, 'Let there be light,' and light immediately appeared; and even then it was quite sufficient to guide man through the darkness of earth to the light and blessedness of immortality.

It becomes a deeply interesting inquiry as to the precise amount of spiritual light and knowledge the patriarchs



possessed. They had the revelation of nature. They had also an unwritten spiritual revelation. And, later on, from the elder patriarchs they had much traditional information respecting the will of God concerning the race. They were aware of human duty and responsibility; that they ought to serve, worship, and obey God, and were accountable to the extent of their light and privileges. They knew, for instance, if they did well they would be accepted, but if otherwise, sin lay at their door. (Genesis iv. 7.) There is every reason to believe that Adam would communicate to his children and children's children the knowledge of his original purity, intelligence, and happiness. It could not all be blotted from his memory without a miracle. And it is very natural to suppose he would tell his immediate offspring how, in an evil and unguarded hour, he listened to the voice of the tempter, and partook of the forbidden fruit. Century after century rolled by, and the primitive inhabitants of the world clung more or less tenaciously to the hope of the promised Redeemer. Abel offered his sacrifice in the believing anticipation of the great atonement of Christ. It is said 'in process of time' this came to pass. (Genesis iv. 3, 4.) We do not know the exact period, nor is it essential to our inquiry. But we do know that he came before God, in Christian worship, in a very different spirit from Cain: came as a sinner,—a sinner deeply sensible of sin, a sinner feeling and acknowledging his need of a Saviour, a sinner firmly trusting in God's appointed method of reconciliation. And so he offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, a greater and fuller sacrifice, and one that God approved and accepted, because it recognised the necessity and sufficiency of redemption in Jesus. Both Cain and Abel had the best means of knowing God's will in these matters from their parents. And so they came at the appointed time of worship, not ignorant and uninstructed, but no doubt understanding the will of God. But

Cain deliberately and intelligently rejected the atonement of Christ, while Abel received it with strong, sincere, and reverent faith. God therefore had regard to Abel and his offering, and in some evident way no doubt signified such acceptance and approval. Abel appears early to have given his heart to God, and to have become a partaker of saving grace, probably being the first convert of the first preachers of the Gospel, who were driven out of Eden, but not finally banished from grace. And Abel, though dead, has been speaking to the Churches and the nations for ages, to warn, to comfort, to instruct, to encourage, and to bless with a greater influence and power than he could have exercised on the men of his own times. We see no reason to doubt that the posthumous influence of Abel has far outweighed his contemporary influence. Onward, from the days of Abel, the more intelligent and devoted among mankind knew, and rejoiced to believe, that sooner or later the Seed of the woman would effectually 'bruise the serpent's head.' In the household of Seth a Church was established. (Genesis iv. 26.) The Sethites and the Cainites marked the distinction between the Church and the world, the religious and the irreligious; and this difference became more palpable as time went on. (Genesis vi. 1—7.) In those days of abounding evil we are told that Enoch 'walked with God,' indicating the elevated, consistent, thorough, energetic, and confirmed piety of the man. It is not stated that he so walked with God in the days of his youth. Precisely similar language is used of him at that time as is employed with reference to the other patriarchs. But when he married, and entered upon domestic duties and experiences, then it is declared 'he walked with God'; showing, at least, that marriage need not hinder but may even help the piety of Christian people; and that to develop the highest style of religious life we need not go into nunneries and monasteries, but do ordinary business amongst our

fellow men as Enoch did. He evidently went on living like other men in all but sin. And then it is said 'he was not: for God took him;' that is, he was not on earth, not in the family, not in the place of business, not in the paths of Christian usefulness in the Church or benevolent activity in the world,—not on earth at all, in fact, except as a blessed memory, a gracious influence among those who knew him or heard of him, and a most salutary and powerful example for the general good; for he was not even in the grave. He was translated, taken body and soul to heaven; and his translation to heaven without undergoing the pains and pangs of death would greatly strengthen the belief in the immortality of the soul which no doubt then existed. (Hebrews xi. 16.) Noah was a bright light shining amid the awful darkness and corruption of his times, faithfully proclaiming God's truth to that fearfully wicked generation; at least, so far as he grasped and comprehended the truth of God. It appears from the sacred record that he was righteous and perfect among his contemporaries, and like Enoch 'walked with God.' He tried hard to win the wicked about him from evil and unbelief; and hence he is called by Peter 'a preacher of righteousness.' The idea of righteousness which Noah taught is not very fully or definitely stated. It could not have been the comprehensive and luminous notion of righteousness communicated to the Church and the world in later ages.

From the times of Noah the religious history of the world speedily narrows down to a single tribe, and other nations are only incidentally touched so far as they cast light upon the family of Abraham. That friend of God was assured that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. (Genesis xii. 3.) Abraham, like a grand, solitary figure, stands out distinguishable from all the men of his times. He leaves his heathen home at the call of God. He is the first distinctive witness of the unity of the

Godhead. He acts sublimely upon his firm belief in the ultimate redemption of the race. His creed principally comes out in his life, his mission in his migration; and he is not so much seen in the light of an expounder and advocate of the new religion, as he is seen to be 'a living epistle known and read of all men.' In his call we have the beginning of a new and glorious epoch, the fuller disclosure of the grand dispensations of which the Bible is ever speaking. Here is the noble father of a noble race; and from him the work of God is signally traced, like a solitary river among bleak and barren mountains, but flowing on and on, ever deepening and widening till it reaches the Christian age. Jesus said in His controversy with the Jews, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad.' (John viii. 56.) No doubt Christianity was real, precious, and influential in Patriarchal times. Abraham, as the leading character of that Dispensation, saw in some sort 'the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow;' saw the day of Christ as one of light, liberty, peace, hope, and joy; saw it as a day of privilege and blessing, as well as a day of earnest toil for the weal of the race. He looked forward through the coming centuries, and kept his eye steadily fixed, not on the prophets of God as they rose one after another in glorious succession, but on Him of whom the prophets wrote and spoke. Such appears to have been the character and relation of Abraham to the Dispensation under which he lived, and such the light and religious vision as to the day of Christ with which he was favoured. No doubt the grand men of old saw enough to give them heart and hope for the race; but Abraham was especially privileged. His vision of the future was such that he actually rejoiced, according to the language of Jesus, rejoiced exceedingly to see the coming day of Christ, positively exulted in the prospect of his seed, and all the families of the earth being wondrously blessed

by the day of Christ, and, standing on the very tip-toe of expectation, earnestly gazing by anticipation on Gospel times, the grand old man was singularly glad. Are they not right who think that this means something more than mere prophetic foresight, and something too beyond the fact that Abraham was looking down in his disembodied state upon the incarnated Jesus? Christ is speaking of something past, something that had already occurred: he 'saw My day,' as the Angel of the Lord, as the Angel Jehovah, with whom Christ clearly identifies Himself in the eighth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. But let us remember that the gladness of Abraham arose from the fact that he saw something in the past marvellously significant for the future. And to an extent it may perhaps be held to mark Christ's confidence in His own cause. As if Jesus had said to the Jews in that memorable controversy, The devil has his day now, but I shall have My day by-and-by. And He will, though it may seem long in coming. Abraham and others saw enough to justify their joy in the prospect of the coming of the kingdom of heaven. To some extent, perhaps, we see the New Testament in the Old. Yet it is really and truly there, or we could not see it, and the New Testament writers would not have spoken so frequently and emphatically about it. In the gospels and epistles we have repeated reference to the beliefs and sentiments held by the Old Testament writers respecting the coming, the character, and the redeeming work of Christ; and in all this there is something real, the full clearness and significance of which we cannot exactly tell.

The patriarchs, then, possessed the knowledge of God and Divine things, but the degree and clearness of that knowledge we do not fully understand. Probably we see this knowledge in its highest manifestation in Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham. It seems very reasonable to suppose that the people generally knew comparatively

little about God and religion. Take away a few principal characters, and the likelihood is that great religious ignorance would extensively prevail. We cannot, of course, speak in very precise and positive language. But when we remember the religious ignorance of our own times in Christendom itself, aye, and in Protestant England in the nineteenth century of Christianity, we cannot regard it as violently improbable that in Patriarchal times people would sink proportionately below the light and knowledge of their unwritten revelation. If now there be fearful error and ignorance respecting Christianity, with the written Word of God among us, as is seen in the singular beliefs and strange sects of the age, and especially seen among the openly irreligious and outcasts of society,—how great, we are led to ask, would be the moral darkness of men when traditional revelation was the law and guide of human conduct? When we look at the ignorance and moral degradation of Spain and Italy and Ireland, amid modern civilisation and in these enlightened Christian times, we may well ask ourselves what would be the intellectual and moral condition of the people generally in the Patriarchal age? To this question we know that a probable answer only can be returned, but it is a pretty clear one.

It does not appear that there was anything like high mental and moral culture in the Patriarchal age. There was some knowledge of mechanical arts; cities were built, and governmental authority was established. But this still leaves us asking, What was the precise nature of this material civilisation? Very rude inventions would meet the need of the age, but seemingly there was nothing beyond. We do not meet with clear and convincing evidence of great intellectual improvement. Life was simple, and artificial wants were few. This much at all events may be safely affirmed with reference to the earlier part of the Patriarchal Dispensation. And though at the beginning of it men

lived long, and had the experience and observation of many centuries for mental and moral improvement, yet they were not then tried by the subtler temptations, or forced to contemplate the deeper questions of humanity. Consequently, the type of character formed under the Patriarchal Dispensation was one imperfect in intellectual development and spiritual growth. Some few men did appear on the stage head and shoulders above the rest, but this does not materially affect the general question. The Patriarchal Dispensation was the moral and intellectual childhood of the human race. There was all the freedom, the simplicity, and the confidence peculiar to the age of childhood; but the deeper insight and strength of character associated with manhood was manifestly lacking. Yet, as the child is the undeveloped future man, so in the Patriarchal Dispensation we see the germs of the future revelation of God, the elements of the Mosaic and Christian Dispensations. The conflict between good and evil was then going on. A chosen family is seen keeping up the distinction of true believers, having a special covenant, a special revelation, a special mission, and living in the enjoyment of special religious privileges and blessings; and so specially marking the difference between them and the outer world. Here is shadowed forth the dim and rough outline of the future Jewish nation and Christian Church, as it respects an enlarging covenant, a progressive revelation, and the privileges, the blessings, and the trials associated with the later developments of the religion of God.

The Patriarchal Dispensation typified the succeeding Dispensations. The bud is the promise and prophecy of the flower, the child of the man, the dawn of the day, and the blade of the full corn in the ear. And so God having already done and taught so much that was incomplete in itself, and yet perfectly marvellous to thoughtful minds, clearly pointed to a glorious future of grace and truth.

This typical character of the Patriarchal Dispensation must not be pushed to an extreme, and become mythical in our hands; for we deal with historical realities, and not mere legends. And we ought also to remember, that while God was especially the God of the chosen family, their faith was not allowed to degenerate into a narrow, selfish appropriation of Him, as if He were their God only, and not the God of the whole human race. It is true He is called the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Shem; but He also reveals Himself as the Almighty God, as if this were rather His peculiar and distinctive designation. (Genesis xvii. 1.) He is said to be 'the Judge of all the earth.' (Genesis xviii. 25.) In His character of universal Judge He is stated to have had intercourse with Pharaoh and Abimelech. (Genesis xii. 17, xx. 3—8.) He likewise sanctified the priesthood of Melchizedek. (Genesis xiv. 18—20.) He inflicted punishment on Sodom and Gomorrah. (Genesis xix. 27—29.) All this dimly intimates that God meant that religion should not be ultimately monopolised by the chosen family. The covenant with Noah, and the promise of blessings to 'all nations' in Abraham's seed, were surely calculated to impress their descendants with the fact that they were but 'the representatives and not the substitutes of the whole race,' and that the relation in which God stood to the chosen family was simply a clearer and more perfect type of the relation in which He stood to all mankind.

We see, then, that the Patriarchal Dispensation did not conceal Divine, saving truth, did not hide the light of heaven. It made known the grand central fact of revelation, that a Saviour would one day come into the world to redeem and save it. Whatever notions people held respecting the promised Seed of the woman, they must have concluded that He would somehow assuage the woes and rectify the wrongs of humanity. But though this great and important truth was more or less clearly revealed, no system

was organised to bring it to bear directly and savingly on the universal mind. We mean that there was no continuous, distinctive, and well-planned aggression made upon the kingdom of evil. In this the Patriarchal Dispensation, like the Mosaic, was defective, but not to the same extent; for both left the world unevangelised. The Patriarchal Dispensation was intended to be universal as to the race, but failed, partly for want of organisation, and partly through the unfaithfulness of the people of God and the terrible corruption of men. It was far more aggressive in character than the Mosaic Dispensation. Properly speaking, universality is the characteristic of the Patriarchal Dispensation, as it is of the Christian, whereas particularity is the characteristic of the Mosaic Dispensation. Probably the descendants of Cain grew up in absolute infidelity. They were the Deists and Rationalists of the times. God had to rid the world of them by the deluge. Later in the age idolatry appears to have spread, and God had to select a single tribe to preserve the knowledge and worship of Himself among men. But while there were undoubtedly some noble, untiring, zealous efforts made by a few prominent members of the Patriarchal Church to persuade the people to turn from their wickedness, there does not appear to have been any special systematic and organised effort to subjugate the multitude to the authority of God. In this the Patriarchal Dispensation failed. It certainly is not enough that the enemies of an earthly government be told their duty to their country, and reminded that through the mediation of some person, though rebels, they may obtain forgiveness, and continue to live in the enjoyment of the privileges of their country. So long as they remain hostile to their rightful sovereign, on that sovereign's legitimate territory, stubbornly refusing to regard law and listen to reason, means must be vigorously employed to bring them into subjection to existing lawful authority. Government is

under necessity, in such circumstances, of making an energetic movement, offensive and defensive, to conquer the foes and maintain the peace and order of society. It would be bad policy as well as treason to the throne to trifle, when all reasonable efforts to bring such rebels to sanity and subjection had utterly failed. Now in this respect the Patriarchal Dispensation fell short. The rebels up in arms against the throne and monarchy of God were not vigorously encountered. In fact, there was no proper provision made to conduct a campaign against the army of darkness already occupying the field in extraordinary force. The preparations for the coming conflict with Satan and his hosts were only now commencing. The army of God was not yet properly organised and drilled. The Divine plan of attack was not in a sense matured or generally understood. Things as yet mainly existed in purpose and promise. But when 'the fulness of time was come,' war to the death with error and evil,—the complete subjugation of the enemies of the Lord, the utter annihilation of the empire of the devil,—would be everywhere successfully waged, Christ having at last 'the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possessions.' There had been war in heaven, and God executed judgment without mercy upon the angels that fell, and hurled them down quickly into hell. Punishment was swift and severe in their case, and no Saviour was provided for them. But with reference to the human race, God winked at the times of their ignorance, and for a long period forbore entering into judgment and utterly destroying them, as He justly might; till a waiting and earnest Church, equipped for battle, and ready for a daring enterprise, should say, 'Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty: and in Thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things.' Terrible to His foes, who

will be universally repulsed and routed, covered with the shame of overwhelming defeat as the enemies of the Lord and His Anointed.

From this brief and rapid sketch it appears that there existed a simple but real and valuable Christian civilisation throughout the Patriarchal age. When we go back to the days of Cain and Abel, we discover certain evidence of civilisation in their pastoral and agricultural life. Man's original condition was not one of barbarism, but enlightenment and civilisation. We see traces of this from the beginning to the end of the Patriarchal times. The civilisation certainly becomes more evident and varied as the age progresses. We know very little about the tools of the mechanic or the implements of the agriculturist, or the mode of using them; but we do know the fact that such instruments were then in existence, rude enough no doubt, still accomplishing in some sort the work of the age. Beside, cities were then founded, though we are ignorant of the style of architecture and the management of public affairs. Musical instruments were then made, and men were able to play upon them, whatever may have been the character of the music. Communities were then organised; and in the days of Abraham we read of kings who exercised kingly authority over a certain amount of territory; yes, and going to war, which implies weapons of some sort with which to fight. All this shows that the Adamic race was from the very commencement enlightened and civilised, and not in a wild and savage state. And though we do not fully know the condition of society or the manners and customs of the people, we do know that some kind of government was established, that laws were framed and enacted, that educational influences were in operation, and a varied though incomplete moral and material civilisation existed.

We learn another fact from the foregoing outline of

Patriarchal Christianity, that God has always had a Church on earth. Probably after the fall Adam and Eve were soon admitted into that Church, and first constituted the Church. Then Abel would soon follow as the first convert rewarding evangelistic labours. Thence we trace the stream of Church history in Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham; and probably some of their families would be associated with them in Church membership and Church work. But however this may have been, we see most incontestible evidence that God has never been without a Church on earth; and from Scripture we know and believe that He never will: for according to the Christian Scriptures the Church will continue to grow till the world is gathered into it, and there is one fold and one Shepherd, and one song of praise perpetually going up to heaven in love and gratitude.

We learn a third important fact from the sketch just given of the Patriarchal times, that the Christian redemption is the great theme of revelation from the commencement. Indeed, were redemption taken out of the Bible, we should have no Bible left. We should only have a few disjointed statements, without meaning, without dependence on each other, and without harmony of purpose. The string that ties everything together in the grand old Book would be lost, and we should be led to ask ourselves in perfect bewilderment, What does the broken, fragmentary record mean? But as it is, we see Christ from the commencement to the close of the sacred Book, giving unity and signification to it. Christ is all in all in the Patriarchal Church, just as He is in the Jewish and Christian Church. He was a real, personal, present, and precious Saviour in the earliest age as in after ages. He was the life and joy, the sunshine and blessedness, the peace and hope and spiritual power of the Patriarchs, just as He was of the Jews, and is of Christians. So the Church is one

in every age, and revelation is all of a piece, consistent and harmonious throughout.

How thankful we ought to be for the privileges and blessings of our own times! We are living to-day amid the ten thousand meliorating influences of Christian civilisation. The comforts and advantages surrounding us are perfectly marvellous. Instead of having to put up with rude modes of travelling, and ruder modes of healing, or an insufficient supply of the ordinary products of other countries, we have a splendid social, medical, and commercial science, bringing to our very doors all that is necessary to our temporal well-being. Yes, and we live in an age when the Church is full of activity and enterprise, extending her conquests and perpetuating her victories at home and abroad. Not a Church in its infancy, not a Church just being formed, not a Church imperfectly taught and trained to do the work of spreading Christianity, but a Church with a full revelation, a definite commission, and a clear line of action marked out. Not a Church asking for a programme, and wondering what its Lord and Head means it to do. The whole thing is now settled and arranged. She must go forth with steadiness, patience, and energy; go forth from victory to victory, till the world is completely won for Christ. Aye, and the great work of redemption is not now obscurely taught, but clearly and fully explained. Not brought to us in type and symbol, in obscure promise and prophecy, but the whole thing made simple and intelligible to the commonest understanding. We cannot, therefore, too highly value our light and privileges, or be thankful enough that we are allowed to work for God under such blessed influences and advantages. We are not doomed to look on and do nothing, to watch the movements of others but take no part in Christian aggression: we have work to do, and instructions how to do it. And we ought to carry about with us in daily

life the salutary recollection that 'unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.' Responsibilities increase in proportion to our light, gifts, and opportunities. Let this thought sink deep into our soul, while we step by step trace the purpose of God in Christianity, and endeavour to understand the work of the Church.

The all-important question for us to settle is, Shall we act up to our intelligence and privileges, or shall we trifle with the deepest and most sacred convictions of duty? If we wish to elevate and develop our own moral manhood, if we wish to benefit the Church and bless the world, if we wish to glorify God and help forward the blessed Gospel of His Son, we must be up and doing. And really, what is the use of life in an age and nation like this, unless we do something with it that is worth the doing? In other times and under other circumstances men might be indifferent and be less guilty. There might appear to be some justification for their neglecting systematically to spread religion. But those times have gone by for ever. God calls upon us now to strain every nerve to the utmost tension in the propagation of Christianity. He furnishes the means, supplies us with adequate motives, and affords us ten thousand facilities and opportunities for our great work. For His sake and for the sake of others who are perishing around us and away over the seas, shall we not think and speak and work for the consummation of the redeeming scheme, that all flesh may soon see the salvation of God? The sun exists, to shed forth light and mature the precious produce of the soil; the clouds circulate and extend themselves, to water the earth; the winds blow, to purify the atmosphere and aid the commerce of nations; the streams flow, to prevent the stagnation of water and meet the various necessities of man and beast: there is a purpose in the existence of all nature, and everything is serving some useful end. Shall we, the noblest of God's

creatures, be unemployed, or trifling, or even worse than idle in God's busy universe? shall we dare to do evil instead of good? What are we doing or attempting to do for God, amid all our light and blessings, providential and spiritual, in the England of the nineteenth century? Dare we face the question, and take it with us into our closet and into daily life? How shall we face matters of this sort when we come to die? What will be our thoughts and reflections on the work of life at the bar of God and through the everlasting ages? Every consideration says with trumpet-voice, Act well and wisely *now*.

SECTION II.

THE CHURCH PREPARING FOR ITS WORK; OR, THE JEWISH DISPENSATION.

The appearance of God to Moses at the burning bush marks a new epoch in the economy of grace. Up to that time God had simply revealed Himself to the patriarchs as a God of strong power. 'I appeared unto Abraham, and unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by My name Jehovah was I not known to them.' (Exodus vi. 3.) Whether this be understood in an absolute or in a qualified sense, it may perhaps be taken to indicate new relations in the history of His people, immediately to be unfolded by gracious deeds. God said to Moses: 'I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows: and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land, and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.' (Exodus iii. 7, 8.) And when Moses asked how the people should be certified that He

had indeed sent him, the Divine reply was: 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.' And from this time you have the commencement of a grand series of miracles and wonders, God marvellously interposing on behalf of His chosen people. Remember, Moses had first asked the name of God (Exodus iii. 13) before God said, 'I am Jehovah.' (Exodus vi. 3.) So that we may perhaps take the more august name Jehovah, which is God's 'memorial to all generations,' as a name given to satisfy inquiry and to meet the necessity of future stages of redemption. Or, if the august name were given to the patriarchs, as some appear to think, then the Lord simply means that the full import of Jehovah was not revealed to the patriarchs, but that henceforth all the meaning would come out in His revelations and actions. And this is quite in harmony with the progressive nature of revelation, and so seems to clear up the difficulty. God was not and could not be made known to the patriarchs, as He was to their offspring by the mission of Moses, and more especially by the mission of Christ and His apostles. The great scheme of restoration was gradually unfolded to the posterity of Adam passage by passage, chapter by chapter, book by book, till the last verse was written, revelation was complete, the books gathered into one volume, and published. And yet there does appear to have been some special reason why God desired to be known by His name Jehovah, as His one great name to all generations. Perhaps it best expresses His nature under the Old Testament Dispensation, like Emmanuel under the New.

Here then it was that the mission of Moses and the prophets started; this august name was their fundamental revelation, and it indicated the essence and self-existence of God, and that infinite perfections belong to Him exclusively. He had a name above every name, was the only true God, and so Egyptian and all other idolatry was to be

put down and condemned. And it was probably an intimation on the part of God that He meant to vindicate the honour and glory of His august name in new ways and by new methods, that men might see fresh and marvellous exhibitions of His eternal power and Godhead, see that He only was the self-existent and unchangeable God, the Governor and the Redeemer of men. We know how all this was gradually accomplished, and how it came more and more distinctly and intelligibly into view as the ages went on.

From the revelation of the great name of God, systematic and miraculous interposition for man's redemption commences. A number of most imposing facts appear, crowding one after another, like stone after stone rising in some grand edifice, on a foundation previously and slowly prepared. Consistently with the idea of the title Jehovah as a title of relation as well as a proper name of God, we soon find it stated that the Lord passed by Moses, and proclaimed : 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty ; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.' (Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7.) This is God's own exposition of His own great name, a name which did not merely concern the Israelites, but is His 'memorial to all generations,' to all the peoples and ages of the world. It is a glorious exhibition of the character of Jehovah, and an outline of Gospel teaching ; the kingdom of heaven proclaimed in the Old Testament, evangelical doctrine in the broadest and fullest sense, the manifestation of the Divine glory, so to be revealed by-and-by that all flesh would see it together : the glory of His grace to save, of His justice to punish unrepented sin ; ready to pardon and swift to condemn.

Perhaps we should not be far wrong in supposing that the relative signification of Jehovah points to the mediatorial sovereignty of Jesus; that this is the very key of its teaching, referring like the table of contents in the book points to the forthcoming chapters, and so the august name points to what God was about to do by miracle and revelation as their covenant engaged God.

The revelation of the name Jehovah to Moses was immediately followed by the creation of official power. Moses was to go as God's authorised messenger, and to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt. He was to take the official government of the Israelites. But power of another and higher character was conferred: he was to form the Israelites into a Church, as well as organise them into a nation. Indeed, he was to found a Theocracy, and God Himself was to rule over them in all their religious, social, and national affairs. This Theocracy was marvellous in itself, and perfectly unique in the history of mankind. It was based upon God's miraculous interposition, admirably fitted for the age in which it was given and the people for whom it was intended. It had a splendid system of morals, a wise code of civil as well as moral laws, and such institutions as were best calculated to preserve the unity and well-being of the commonwealth. We see in it the most exalted standard of justice, truth, and benevolence, a marvellous insight into human nature as to its needs and its corruptions; and this Theocracy has come down to us as the grandest thing of the past with the solitary exception of the blessed Gospel. It was a God-created constitution for the government of a chosen people, and from first to last it was based upon pure and undefiled religion, was, in fact, of direct Divine communication. They were to be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. Religion was to touch the nation at every point, and pervade it altogether and everywhere. All they did was to be religiously done. The law

given from Mount Sinai was to be the foundation of all their conduct in every relation and position of life.

But this glorious Theocracy, remember, was a symbol of the wider rule of God over men. It was initial, and not final. It clearly points to a kingdom of God, a reign of heaven yet to come, and foreshadows Christianity. Yes; and the vision of prophecy reached beyond the Jewish nation, as we see in the glorious vision of Balaam, who was desired by Balak, king of Moab, to curse the Israelites. Balaam, a Gentile, recognised the Messiah, and said what is not recorded by Moses but by the prophet Micah (vi. 5—7): ‘O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?’ And then, the wonderful vision widening, extending into Gentile territory, he said of Messiah: ‘I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.’ (Numbers xxiv. 17.) The same sentiment runs through the whole of Jewish prophecy, the vision of such prophecy frequently reaching far beyond the chosen people. The language of David is, ‘Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth.’ The temple at Jerusalem was to be ‘a house of prayer for all nations.’ God’s glory was to be declared among the Gentiles. (Isaiah lxvi. 19.) There were intimations of a brighter future, going far beyond the glorious past. ‘O Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all

the earth !' 'Sit Thou on my right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.' (Psalm cx. 1.) In the coming ages, the glory of the Lord was so to be revealed, that all flesh might see it together. (Isaiah xl. 5.) Such a revelation of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God as would fill the intelligent universe with astonishment and joy, and display the glory and grandeur of the Divine perfections.

Divine revelation is growth, like a tree from a germ. All the truths and principles of the later revelations were in the earlier revelations. Christ is the Author and Finisher of all faith ; not only of personal trust for personal salvation, but of the creeds of the Church. All light and all salvation have their origin in the Cross of Jesus. This is a fact presented in a hundred forms in the Scriptures. We see how beautifully the Jewish Dispensation widens and grows as it proceeds. 'For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given : and the government shall be upon His shoulder : and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.' (Isaiah ix. 6, 7). This almost reads like New Testament language. Further on the evangelical prophet says : 'He is despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' Then again : 'But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ; and with His stripes we are healed.' Further still he says : 'He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.' (Isaiah liii. 3, 5, 10.) These sound very much like quotations from the Gospels, as if they were historical statements rather than prophetic declarations. Jeremiah and Ezekiel make very pointed

reference to the coming of the world's Redeemer. Daniel, taking up the subject, says: 'And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.' (Daniel ii. 44.) He further speaks of the King in this kingdom as the Son of man, the very title which Christ appropriated to Himself in the Gospel.

It is thought and said by some to be unworthy of God to give revelation bit by bit, in successive ages and in different forms. But we must leave God to be the judge of His own conduct, to decide what is best for Him to do, and the fittest time and mode of doing it. Of the time and form of communicating revelation we are not competent to form a clear and sound judgment beforehand, to say the least. For precisely the same reason we might say the revelation of nature is not worthy of God, or that many things in the operation of nature are not worthy of God, because gradually developed. It is easy to ask, Why did God keep the world so long without revelation? and why only give revelation to the Jews for so long a period after He did begin to inspire men? Why, again, did God only furnish small instalments, comparatively insignificant portions of His revealed will, and not give a complete Bible to begin with? No doubt God had sufficient reason for this, the wisdom and weight of which we may partly but not fully see. And we might almost as well ask, as to the ordinary course of nature, Why does not midday come the same instant as the dawn? Why do not the crops come the instant the seed is put in the soil? Religion, like all the works of God, is of very gradual development. The life of man is so brief and uncertain, that he must of necessity hurry on with his plans and purposes, or he will fail to execute them. It is so in business, in art, in literature, in

science, in social, political, and religious affairs. In every department of life and labour men must be prompt and energetic, or fail. Yet God works by very slow, deliberate, and gradual steps. We see it in creation, we see it in providence, we see it in redemption. Theories of geology speak of the slow and gradual formation of the earth; that it was not formed in six days of twenty-four hours, but in six indefinite periods, probably stretching over millions of ages. The oak grows slowly. First you have the blade, then the ear, and afterwards the full corn in the ear everywhere in nature. The history of a flower proclaims the operation of the same principle. Nations rise slowly. It is precisely so in the history of the Church. No wonder then that we find something analogous to all this in Christianity, or that the Bible grew fragment by fragment. It is in harmony with all else that Christ only came in 'the fulness of the ages.'

You see, then, in passing from the Patriarchal to the Jewish Dispensation we find clear and substantial progress, but not completion; greater means, but not perfect organisation; more Divine light, but not strict and proper aggression. The Mosaic Dispensation did much, but it held out the hope and promise of far more than it actually accomplished. It was more than the grey twilight, more than the dim dawn of the Christian day; it was the glorious morning. Under this dispensation, as we have seen, prophecy became more comprehensive, and far clearer and more emphatic in its utterances. It distinctly foretold that a prophet would be raised up from the midst of the people, and that prophet was Christ. (Deuteronomy xviii. 15; John i. 45; Acts iii. 22.) The time of His crucifixion is pointed out. (Daniel ix. 26.) The place of His birth is pointedly referred to. (Micah v. 2.) His unequalled sufferings are described with a foresight bordering on historical accuracy. (Isaiah liii.) His resurrection from the

dead without seeing corruption is plainly indicated. (Psalm xvi. 10.) So you see the coming, the character, and the redeeming work of Christ were gradually unfolded by Jewish seers with growing and increasing light. The great plan of redemption was published with progressive intelligence. The marvellous work God intended to accomplish in 'the fulness of the ages' was more clearly understood and intelligently recognised as age after age rolled by.

To the united voice of prophecy must be added the beautiful and illustrative teaching of types. Typical persons, typical places, typical events, and typical things all pointed out with growing knowledge God's method of grace to the Jewish Church. Many of the great deliverers of Israel were types of Christ, as Moses, Joshua, and David. Many typical circumstances referred to the redemption of the Gospel. The paschal lamb pointed to Christ our Passover sacrificed for us. The brazen serpent exhibited by Moses to the serpent-bitten Israelites in the wilderness was an emblem of Christ uplifted for the healing of the nations. The lamb slain in the service of the tabernacle or temple at morning or evening sacrifice told of the 'Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' By animal sacrifices the Jews were taught to look forward to the atoning death of Christ, and so were instructed in the fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion, 'without shedding of blood is no remission.' The ceremonial law is thus seen to be a schoolmaster to bring the people to Christ. The Christian Dispensation is evidently the outgrowth and fuller legitimate development of the Mosaic Dispensation. The old dispensation is typical of the new dispensation. The one prepared and educated the people for the other, just as the provincial grammar school prepares for the college. There is an undoubted connection and harmony between all the Divine Dispensations.

The religion of God is absolutely one and the same

under the whole dispensations, which are inseparably connected. The Great Teacher did not come to destroy the law and the prophets, just as a man pulls down the old house when he wishes to build an entirely new one on the same site; 'I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.' The different dispensations are the different stages, the progressive marks of the one glorious work, the different steps in the redemptive scheme. The Old Testament saints saw not the grand reality, the sublime substance, but merely the dim, passing shadow, the feeble type, the faint outline of the picture to be filled in by-and-by. Under the old dispensation we only get the bare outline of Christian doctrine; but under the New Testament Dispensation that bare outline is completely filled up, and nothing left to be taught us by further revelation. Under the old dispensation a privileged few might know more than their contemporaries, but the great bulk of the people would know comparatively little; under the new dispensation we all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and, unveiled, see for ourselves, with freedom and marvellous vision, the grandeur of the Divine character and designs in Jesus.

But while the Jewish Dispensation more fully unfolded the Divine purposes than the Patriarchal, it was not essentially aggressive. In itself it was imperfect and incomplete. Hence the apostle refers to the taking away of the old dispensation for the bringing in of a better hope. 'He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second.' The Jewish religion was not applicable to all times and conditions as a religion for universal man. In its own nature it was not fitted to become the religion of the world. It wanted the peculiar elasticity of Christianity. By its institutions and ceremonial observances it was localised and temporary, and could not have been acted out by people in every part of the world.

Remember, too, that Judaism was exclusive; narrow in its sympathies and ideas, and exceedingly limited in its provision, shutting out the notion of enlightening and saving the Gentiles. God indeed did not send His prophets to the Gentiles, unless in a few exceptional instances; they were the teachers of the chosen family and not of the nations impartially. We say, then, the Mosaic Dispensation by its own nature was exclusive and not aggressive. It was greatly in advance of the Patriarchal Dispensation as it respects Divine knowledge, and it served admirably to prepare the minds of men for the Gospel Dispensation. No doubt, too, many heathens around the Jewish nation indirectly received partial light from the Jewish Scriptures. Travellers would obtain some knowledge of the writings of Moses, and Jews going among other peoples, as captives or for commercial purposes, would be the means in many ways of spreading Divine light. But whatever benefit Gentile nations derived from Judaism was occasional, and arose out of accidental or providential circumstances; it was not in any instances the result of organised aggression. The Jews considered themselves the only people of God, and all beside outcast and accursed. Consequently they made no systematic effort to convert and instruct aliens. So far from going to people of another nation to enlighten and turn them to God, it was deemed an unlawful enterprise. Hence, at the beginning of the Christian Dispensation it required both grace and the working of a miracle to induce Peter to go and preach the Gospel to Gentiles. So, we see, the progressive growth, the acknowledged advancement of religion under the Mosaic Dispensation was principally within the Jewish nation; and whatever inroads were made upon the ignorance and superstition of other nations were either chance occurrences, or the outcome of some singular Divine providence. Such results were not owing to

the aggressive character and constitution of the Jewish Church. That Church provided for the godly instruction, the substantial Christian training of the Jews; it diffused religious knowledge among its own people, pointed to a far more glorious era in the future history of the world, and thus wonderfully prepared the way for the everlasting Gospel of the Son of God: just as elementary grounding in classics prepares for the university, as the temporary erection prepares for the splendid edifice, and as the first rude parliament prepares for the enlightened and comprehensive legislation of later times. The Mosaic Dispensation was the bud, the Christian Dispensation is that bud expanded into a full-blown flower. The Mosaic Dispensation was the boyhood of religion, the Christian Dispensation is that boyhood grown and developed into manhood. The Gospel is only the new dispensation in the sense of increased light and grace, and not in the sense of having an entirely new and different nature, or one of opposite character. The religion of the past dispensations largely resembled the scaffolding put up for the completion of some grand national building; or the Divine dispensations may be more fittingly compared to that noble national structure in the course of erection, from laying the foundation to putting on the top-stone and finishing the roof, till the building stands forth in all respects complete according to the ideal of the architect.

The proverb says that 'coming events cast their shadows before them.' It was especially so with reference to the Christian Dispensation. As Faber tells us: 'The Sun of righteousness was about to rise on the Gentiles: and, like the natural sun, he was preceded by twilight. Through the medium of the Babylonian captivity the truth was carried into the East; by the emigration of numerous Jews into Egypt and into various parts of Asia, it was borne likewise into those several countries; the translation of the

Hebrew Scriptures into Greek offered facilities for the acquisition of Divine knowledge not hitherto enjoyed by pagans : and many proselytes to the worship of Jehovah, though not descended from the stock of Abraham, were received with gradually increasing numbers into the pale of the Levitical Church.' The Mosaic Dispensation marks a clear step in advance, an additional link in the chain, another course laid in the beautiful temple of truth, another stage in the economy of grace ; and as that Dispensation approached its termination, it gathered especial lustre and meaning from the near advent of Jesus. No doubt toward this blessed consummation of the Mosaic Dispensation many things contributed : the geographic position of the people, their commercial spirit, and God's governing the world on behalf of the Church ; but down at the bottom, below all else, in this as in the other Dispensations, we see God and His will.

When we come carefully to look into the nature of the Mosaic Dispensation, we see with what force Christ confronted the Jews in that memorable controversy with them recorded in the Gospel according to John (v. 45—47): 'Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father : there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me : for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words ?' The whole Dispensation looked forward to Christ, and to His great work for men. To the same purpose is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man is represented as pleading with Abraham that a messenger might be sent from the other world to his father's house, lest his five brethren should come into that terrible place of torment ; and so, not only themselves be hopelessly punished, but increase his punishment, as he had probably led them into ways of evil, or induced them to go further into wickedness than they

otherwise would. The reply of Abraham was, 'They have Moses and the prophets'; they are not ignorant and neglected, what they have is sufficient to guide them to glory; they need nothing more, it would be superfluous to send them other teachers and guides while they disregard these. 'Let them hear them'; let them read and ponder Moses and the prophets, and they need not be lost; they will find light enough to lead them to heaven. And to the further pleading it was said, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.' (Luke xvi. 29—31.) We see this illustrated in the unbelief of the Jews, notwithstanding the resurrection of Lazarus and the resurrection of Jesus, the Son of Abraham. The parable intimates the truth, that, if the teaching of Moses and the prophets does not impress and save them, all further efforts would be lost upon them. This shows the sufficiency of the Mosaic Dispensation for the salvation of the Jews in olden time.

If this much may be affirmed with reference to the Mosaic Dispensation, what shall we say with regard to the Gospel Dispensation, when light is so great, and Christian teaching so clear, comprehensive, and convincing? Yes, people think, But if we had only more startling, more sensational preaching, then there would be a greater probability of us and ours being saved. So far as we can see sensational preaching may excite curiosity, but it does not convert sinners, enlarge and build up the Church of Christ. It is the simple statement of evangelical truth which is needed, and the simple belief of that truth brings salvation. If this does not save people we know of nothing which will. The Jews and the Greeks wanted Paul to tell them something that would startle and excite them. Nay, said the apostle; that is out of the Christian line of things. We have only a plain, unadorned message to deliver, and we keep to it, and have no thought of departing from it.

'We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness'; but to those who humbly and sincerely accept the message, 'Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.' Yes; perhaps others think, if all ministers were only revivalists, surely all would go on grandly in the Church, and multitudes of unconverted people would be speedily gathered into the fold of God. People forget that no mere minister can revive the Church. It is the work of God to do that. And if people trusted less in ministers and more in God, there would be greater Church extension and prosperity. Really and truly speaking, unbelief and the love of sin lie at the root of all attempts to get some substitute for plain Christian truth and the Divinely ordained means of grace. It is but another way of wishing something extraordinary, or that one might rise from the dead, as if ordinary means were insufficient. It is rather a belief in the marvellous than in the truth. God has ordained that in all ages faith in Christ shall save people; a retrospective faith for the people of to-day, a prospective faith under the Patriarchal and Mosaic Dispensations.

SECTION III.

CHURCH PREPARATION CONSUMMATED; OR, THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

Passing from the Mosaic to the Christian Dispensation, we see that the Christian Dispensation actually is what the preceding Dispensations promised and shadowed forth. The light kindled by Christianity is a light for the world—not for any particular nation, but for every nation; and a light kindled never to be extinguished, but destined to burn till the whole earth is illuminated. Occasionally the light seems to have been in danger of going out, as in the Middle Ages

and at other times ; but when the flame has been feeble and flickering reformations and revivals have fanned it up to unwonted brightness. God has raised up men and poured out His Spirit; and so through Divine quickening the light has never been wholly lost. Or, to change the figure, if the sun has passed under a cloud, it soon broke through the gloom, and again irradiated the soul and intellect of men. Christianity is not the pale moonlight of tradition possessed by the heathen, nor the dim twilight possessed by the patriarchs, nor the light of the morning, with its clouds and mists, possessed by the Jews ; but the clear, broad, open day of Divine dealing with a lost race. What had been so long looked for and expected has now fully come ; and all the essentials of salvation are so intelligible, that he who runs may read.

The aggressive character of Christianity is seen from the preaching of John the Baptist. John was the connecting link, the strong coupling chain, between the old and new dispensations. He introduced the Gospel. 'In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye : for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' (Matthew iii. 1, 2.) A new kingdom was about to be set up: a kingdom of heaven, a kingdom of right, truth, purity, love, peace, and joy; a kingdom Divine in its origin, principles, and laws; a kingdom with a Divine king to rule over Divinely gathered subjects; a kingdom on earth leading up to a kingdom in heaven above that will eternally exist. Now John was sent as the harbinger of Jesus, the messenger to prepare the way and announce the coming of the mightier One just at hand. So, uniting in himself the two Dispensations, he terminated the old and commenced the new. 'When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he

answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou ? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself ? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.' (John i. 19—23.) The humility, the honesty, the sincerity, the thoroughness of this plain man of the desert are very refreshing to contemplate in these artificial days. He was simply bent on the accomplishment of his mission, only concerned to finish the work given him to do. The next day John saw Jesus, and recognising in Him the Anointed of God, he said to the persons around him, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' (John i. 29.) Christ he frankly acknowledged was preferred before him, for in reality He was before him. All that John did and said directed the people to Jesus. He strongly urged them to be sincerely sorry for their sins, and thoroughly to amend their lives. He tried to break down their vain confidence, to shake their proud hearts, and completely to sweep away the very foundation of their imaginary goodness. He told them that saving religion was a personal thing, and that by virtue of their relation to Abraham they would never get to heaven. Only one way of escape from everlasting punishment was open, and they must therefore 'flee from the wrath to come,' seek refuge in Christ by accepting Him as their personal Saviour ; and in this way they would become the spiritual subjects of the kingdom He was about to establish. Thus this man of convincing speech and undaunted courage preached to the mixed multitudes thronging to his ministry from 'Jerusalem and Judæa and all the region round about Jordan.' He 'indeed baptized with water unto repentance'; but plainly stated, 'He that cometh after me,' who is in fact now on His way, and will immediately appear, will 'baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire.' As if this grand, outspoken man had said, My

baptism is very humble indeed, but the higher and more important baptism is close at hand. It was a superior baptism by a superior Personage of which he was now speaking, and for which he was glad to prepare the way. His whole language and conduct told of a mightier One, not far off, who possessed a Divine power, whereas John's was but human; who possessed infinite power, whereas John's was but finite; who possessed 'all power in heaven and earth,' whereas John's was confined within a very narrow and limited sphere. The whole effort of John was to get the people to look above and beyond himself to a more exalted Personage and a far nobler ministry. As the needle points to the pole, so the ministry of John pointed to Jesus. As the herald prepares the way for the monarch, so John prepared the way for Christ. He cautioned the people against looking to him, and exhorted them to turn their earnest, believing gaze toward Him 'that should come,' and that speedily. Bending beneath the burden of his message, and hiding himself as much as possible from the thoughts of the people, he endeavoured to exhibit Christ and His kingdom only as the hope of Israel and of the race. Their hearts were deeply stirred, as new thoughts and hopes sprang up in their breast, begotten by the preaching of John. The ministry of John prepared them to listen to Jesus. It was henceforth a settled thing that the long-lost prophetic office was restored in John; for all the people held that John was a prophet. John, it is clear, was the instrument of commencing a new movement: what would become of it, and where would it end? John died without witnessing the completion of the new movement, but the cause went on successfully, though he knew it not, for the cause was of God. He had lived a brief life, a life of struggle, a life of earnest work, a life of hope as well as toil for the attainment of something better for himself and the people. And though it was apparently a baffled life,

ending prematurely, as we imagine, and to a large extent a seeming failure, yet John did not live in vain ; for Jesus took up the movement where John left it, and carried it on, controlled and directed it with a wisdom and power beyond the reach of John.

The aggressive character of Christianity is further seen from the ministry of Jesus. Hardly had the voice of John ceased to vibrate on the ears of the vast multitudes congregated in the wilderness of Judæa before another voice broke the brief silence. Christ quickly followed in the footsteps of John, preaching the same Gospel, to the same sort of people, and from the same motives urging the performance of the same religious duties ; and were it not that He died as an atonement for sin, we should say that He too died prematurely, like John, and that in His case, as in John's, His purity and devotion cost Him His life. 'Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand : repent ye, and believe the Gospel.' (Mark i. 14, 15.) If we examine the teaching of Christ in the light of His character and conduct, we not only see that He inculcated truths and principles far deeper and broader than all His predecessors, but also that He lived and illustrated these truths and principles by His life. He worked out His own doctrine by His personal example ; practised what He taught the people. The truth He taught the people was truth for all nations and for all time. In His teaching He was as much above Socrates and Plato as Socrates and Plato were above ordinary men. He went far above the teachings of philosophers, and beyond the traditions of the elders ; and in what He taught there was marvellous soul and sympathy. It is wonderful how people were drawn to Him, seeing things in a new light, and feeling toward them with a new feeling ; insomuch that

all sorts of sin and misery came confessing wrong and seeking help.

In the sermon on the mount Jesus said, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.' (Matthew v. 17.) As if He had said, I am not come to destroy the authority and principles of the Mosaic Dispensation; my coming is to fulfil the predictions and promises of the Old Testament, to build upon those ancient foundations of faith, to rear a glorious edifice upon the Divine teaching of the past, and not to pause in this momentous business till the sublime architecture is complete. My mission is not destructive but constructive, not to pull down but to build up: 'I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.' Not to subvert, to abrogate, and annul; not to set aside as useless and worthless; not to trample upon the law and prophets as if out of date and altogether belonging to a bygone age; not to treat them with open disrespect or silently to ignore them: but rather to unfold their deep and beautiful meaning, to embody them in living form, to make them something more than a mere theory for the leading scholars to speculate upon; I intend to make them a grand and blessed life, enshrining them in the consciences, affections, and characters of men, and so to make religion an intensely practical thing. Yes; and in His legislative capacity He asserted that no loss of authority or vitality should be permitted to come over the law, till the Divine purpose was accomplished. 'For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.' (Matthew v. 18.) At the end of His sermon on the mount it is stated that 'the people were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.' (Matthew vii. 28, 29.) He taught them, too, that He had authority to change the Dispensations. 'Come unto Me, all ye that

labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' (Matthew xi. 28, &c.) Not only rest from a guilty conscience and the fearful burden of sin, but rest from ceremonial observances,—a burden, as Peter afterwards reminded them, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. (Acts xv. 10.) But the authority of Jesus was not limited to the Israelitish nation; it extended to the Gentiles. He was 'a light to lighten the Gentiles,' as well as 'the glory of the people of Israel.' (Luke ii. 32.) Through His preached Gospel not merely Jews, but numerous Gentiles should enter the kingdom of heaven: should come from the east and the west and the north and the south, from every quarter of the globe, and should sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets; while the children of the kingdom, the nominal children of the kingdom, or those amongst whom it had been first established, and who first had the advantage of its light and blessings, should be thrust out into the outer darkness, where there should be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew viii. 11, 12; Luke xiii. 28, 29.) He taught them by the parable of the unfaithful husbandmen and the vineyard that the Gospel would be taken from them and given to the Gentiles. He informed them that 'Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles,' that He would 'show judgment to the Gentiles,' and that 'in His name would the Gentiles trust.' John, the last of the apostles, supplementing the other gospels on the teaching of Jesus, enters beautifully and comprehensively into the incarnation and purpose of Christ's ministry. He says: 'The Word was made flesh,'—the same Word that was 'in the beginning with God'—'and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.' (John i. 14.) There was in Jesus a glory befitting the only begotten Son of the Father, and a fulness of grace and

truth: grace to redeem and save; truth as the accomplishment of the promise of God. 'And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.' (John i. 16.) We have received grace in rich, successive communications, by a progressive revelation. 'For the law was given by Moses'—a law which symbolised a loftier dispensation,—'but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ': the substance shadowed forth by the old dispensation. What was foretold and typified in the Old Testament was abundantly accomplished in Jesus. Then John goes on (verse 18) to show that Jesus was the revelation of the Father. And this is illustrated in the third chapter, in Christ teaching to Nicodemus a spiritual religion, and that men must of necessity be born into the kingdom of God by the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost. Beside, the lifting up of the brazen serpent by Moses, Jesus shows, was emblematical of the lifting up of Himself as a sacrifice for sin, that the world labouring under the fatal malady of sin might find healing and salvation in Him. Further still, He shows (chapter iii. 16, 17) that 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.' It was not merely loving Jews, but Gentiles also. He 'sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.' All this clearly indicates the world-wide sphere of Christianity, that it was never meant for the Jews only, but is one of those universal blessings too big for the monopoly of a single nation.

Nor did Jesus confine His ministry to respectable people in a moral or worldly sense, but went to harlots, publicans, and sinners; went to the most abandoned characters of society, pitied them, encouraged them to make a strong effort to attain moral goodness, and aided them by holding out to them His own hand. While the Pharisees of the time were looking down with pride and contempt on the

notorious sinners around them, Jesus was struggling to lift up the degraded ones by His sympathy and personal efforts. Parliaments in our time have discussed plans of lateral and vertical reform, but Jesus combined both principles in His Gospel. He not only extended the spiritual franchise, embracing a greater number occupying the same moral level, but He went lower down than the platform of all previous reformers of the moral character of the people, preaching hope and mercy to those neglected by everybody else. His own clear, strong statement was: 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.' (Luke xix. 10.) Up to the time of Christ John was the greatest born of woman; yet afterwards the least in the kingdom of God was greater than he. Such was the definite and comprehensive teaching, the all-embracing sympathy and effort of Jesus. Christ loved everybody, cared for everybody, sought the welfare of everybody, offered assistance to everybody.

Nor did Christ confine His ministry to those within the pale of the Jewish Church. We have on record several remarkable instances in which He extended His preaching beyond the Jewish commonwealth. The Syro-Phœnician woman, a woman of Canaan, as Matthew calls her, is a case in point. (Mark vii. 26.) The probability is that on this occasion Jesus entered heathen territory, at least, so it is thought by some. The poor woman had a daughter possessed by an unclean spirit. She besought Jesus to cast the devil out of her daughter. At first He was perfectly silent, did not say a single word to encourage her. (Matthew xv. 23.) But as He did not raise any objection, though speechless, she pressed her case once more. The disciples wanted Him to send her away because her importunity became annoying to them. When He did speak He simply said He was only 'sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Her application seemed utterly hopeless,

and He had not professedly come as a missionary to the Gentiles, or hitherto sent His disciples into the way of the Gentiles (Matthew x. 5); though He never hindered the conversion of the Gentiles, and this whole case plainly indicated the vast spiritual blessings in store for the Gentiles. What was she to do? What could she do, but with one last, earnest cry say, 'Lord, help me'? Even then Christ intimated that it was not in itself fitting to take the children's bread and give it to dogs. That seemed a terrible repulse, to call a woman a dog. Yet with her womanly intuition and earnest faith she gathered encouragement out of it. Her ready reply was, 'Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.' As much as to say, If I be a Gentile dog, I at least get the crumbs. 'Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.' This case showed that there was hope for the Gentiles, and already it has been made a blessing to millions of Gentiles, and will doubtless be made a blessing to millions more in the ages to come.

The Samaritan leper is another illustrative example. (Luke xvii. 12—19.) The Gospel states that ten lepers besought Christ to have mercy on them. He healed them, and told them to go and show themselves to the priests. One of them, wondering at the great change that had passed over him, and filled with gratitude and joy at the thought of it, turned back to render thanks to his great Benefactor; only one, as it seems,—'and he was a Samaritan': a half heathen, to say the least. Teaching us the necessity of breaking up new ground, that it is needful for the Church to put forth aggressive effort, and that in so many instances the most unpromising cases humanly speaking are the most successful. 'And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God,

save this stranger.' For all time the case of this alien is an instructive one for the Church, and the Church ought not to be slow to learn. She ought to try the very worst neighbourhoods, places that were once tried but abandoned years ago, and however ignorant and heathenish people may be, she ought never to despair of their conversion to God.

The woman of Samaria is another memorable and instructive example. The Samaritans were partly Jewish and partly heathen; and they rejected all but the five books of Moses. Between them and the Jews there was bitter and deep-rooted enmity. Hence when Christ on His way from Judæa to Galilee, passing through Samaria, requested water to drink of a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, she was astonished out of measure, and inquired, 'How is it that thou being a Jew askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.' (John iv. 9, &c.) Christ talked to her about 'living water,' intimating that only ignorance of Him and His mission prevented her asking in return the water of life. Gradually light broke in upon her dark mind from the conversation of Christ, so beautifully recorded by John, and by John only, that she by-and-by consistently reached the conclusion that He with whom she talked must be an extraordinary person. First she thought at least He must be a prophet; then both from His own statement that He really was the foretold and expected Messiah, and from the marvellous knowledge He manifested of her personal history, she concluded that He was the Christ of God. The result was many of the Samaritans were led to listen to the teaching of Jesus, and by that very teaching were led to believe that 'He was indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.' We greatly wonder what the disciples would think when they returned from the purchase of bread, and found the Master talking with the Samaritan woman; and when they recovered from

their astonishment, and afterwards saw the result and significance of that wonderful conversation, what would they think? Did they ask themselves, What does it all mean? At first they were too startled and perplexed to look into the full meaning of the circumstance; but did they afterwards, upon calm reflection, get down to the depth of meaning in that marvellous incident? We know not. It wanted four months to harvest, but at Sychar the fields were already white unto harvest. The people there were ripe for Christianity. 'They besought Him to tarry with them: and He abode there two days.' (John iv. 40.) The two days' ministry of Jesus in the half-heathen city of Samaria is one of the most remarkable incidents we come upon in the whole Gospel. In every way it possesses a deep and significant meaning for those who thoroughly ponder it. Here we have the most illustrious instance of the aggressive ministry of the Son of God. Surely it must have impressed the disciples with the fact that the days of Jewish religious exclusiveness were numbered. It seems impossible they should altogether escape the idea that Christianity was intended for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. But the blinding power of prejudice almost passes belief.

One other instance of the aggressive ministry of Jesus is seen in the healing of the servant of the Roman centurion. When the Roman centurion heard of Jesus being at Capernaum, he sent the Jewish elders, beseeching Him to go at once and heal the sick man. The centurion was a heathen by birth and education, yet he had got some knowledge of the Jewish religion. It seems the Jewish elders were prepared to urge the request of this Roman centurion. Indeed, they 'besought Jesus to go instantly, saying, He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue.' Jesus went with them, as it appears, without hesitation or postponing the visit. When nearing the house of the Roman centurion

he sent some friends to Jesus, saying, 'Lord, trouble not Thyself: for I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof: neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things, He marvelled at him, and turned Him about, and said unto the people that followed Him, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.' (Luke vii. 3—9.) It is not often said that Jesus marvelled, only in some two or three instances in the whole Gospel; but He did marvel at the intelligent and strong faith of this Roman centurion. Yes; and Jesus held up a heathen to whom He had gone as a rebuke to the chosen race: just as the parable of the good Samaritan rebukes Jewish narrowness and selfishness, and makes a heathen a type of goodness. All this points to one conclusion: the Gentiles were soon to be blessed by the call of the Gospel.

So we see Christ, the Pattern of all Christian workers, went about doing good; and while He specially aimed at benefitting the soul, did not overlook and neglect the claims of the body, teaching that the Christian Church should be both spiritual and philanthropic, in order effectually to accomplish her mission. He personally acted in the capacity of a home and foreign missionary: going on preaching tours through the villages, towns, and cities, publishing Himself the glad tidings of salvation, and caring for Gentiles as well as Jews. By thus breaking down old barriers, cutting national prejudice up by the roots, removing the landmarks of national narrowness, He could but have one meaning: that progress would henceforth be the policy of God. Both by His speech and act, His doctrine and example, in fact, by His whole bearing and work, Christ carefully im-

pressed upon the popular mind the aggressive character of Christianity, or intended to produce and deepen such conviction in the heart of society. The old bottles would not hold the new wine. The old garment was too tender to bear the patch of new cloth. The old channel was not deep enough and broad enough; another channel must be dug for the free flow of the water of life. Not one nation but every nation must be admitted to light and grace and blessing in Jesus, and have equal spiritual privileges before the God and Father of all. As the sun shines for all, as the atmosphere is breathed by all, as showers descend for all, and as the earth is fruitful for all, so must the blessed Gospel become the Gospel of all. And the teaching and conduct of Jesus showed those who had eyes to see that the policy of God would henceforth embrace those sons in 'the far country,' who, though they had left their Father's house, were not forgotten by Him, and would not longer be neglected, but sought out and recovered to the Divine favour and family.

The aggressive character of Christianity is evident from the apostolic commission. First Christ gathered around Him twelve men to assist Him in the establishment of His kingdom; from fishing in the sea He called them to be fishers of men, ordained them to the permanent work and office of the Christian ministry. He gave them power over all devils, and to cure diseases; sent them to preach the Gospel of the kingdom, and to heal the sick. (Luke ix. 1, 2.) He afterwards appointed other seventy, sending them two and two before His face into every city and place whither He Himself would come. (Luke x. 1—12.) The work of these seventy evangelists appears to have been a hasty kind of rough, temporary pioneering, like the advanced guard going ahead of the main army. The burden of their message to the people was simply this, 'The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.' They were not fitted or intended

to enter into elaborate statements of the doctrine and policy of the kingdom. That would come in due course. They soon did their work; and having called attention to a great movement going on all around them, having simply proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom of God, and so excited Jewish hope and curiosity, in the time of the nation's greatest moral need and intellectual weariness in looking for means and methods of spiritual deliverance,—they returned with joy at the idea of their success and the subjection of the devils, gave in their report, and we never read of them again in the Gospels. But as to the twelve, when Christ had risen He extended their commission, making it not Jewish but universal. As mediatorial Sovereign, all power was given to Him in heaven and earth, and so He said, 'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' (Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.) The parallel passage in Mark (xvi. 15) runs thus: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.' The world needed them. He had authority to send them, and so gave them marching orders. They were to go into all the world, to disciple all nations, proclaiming Christian truth, making offers of salvation to each human being in every country under heaven, and not to cease their aggressive efforts till all had become the loyal subjects of the empire of grace. Repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke xxiv. 47.) Up to this point the missionaries of the Cross were not to go in the way of the Gentiles. They had not the necessary intelligence for such a work, and were not prepared in spirit for its difficulties and discouragements. Beside, the mission of the Master Himself was principally to 'the lost sheep of the

house of Israel,' and only a few remarkable exceptions indicated the future widening sphere of the Gospel. And even now Jerusalem was to form the starting point of their world-wide mission. They were to commence their evangelistic efforts in Jerusalem, and from thence push out among the nations. They were to go to the murderers of Christ first, seek out the men who killed Him, and make them the very first offer of mercy as the preachers of a Gospel not of revenge but love. They were to tarry in Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high; and would have made little out anywhere or anyhow unless by such Divinely communicated power. Jerusalem had been the grand centre round which the labours of Christ had gathered. They were therefore to begin in the metropolis of the country where Christ had taught His doctrine, worked His miracles, uttered His prophecies, suffered, died, risen, and ascended. We say, where all this had transpired the apostles were to commence preaching Jesus and the resurrection; because beginning at Jerusalem would strengthen their cause and argue its Divine origin, as well as teach the Church of the future to care for home as well as foreign missions. Yes; to care for home first, as the very method established by God, to do the work at hand first, as the most economical, the most speedy, and the most rational way of proceeding. Had they gone from Jerusalem, the scene of the most important Christian events, without lifting up their voice in favour of Christianity, it might then and afterwards have been construed into evidence of the weakness of their cause. But as directed by Christ, they began at Jerusalem, and then went round the nations, planting Churches and gathering converts to Christianity. And at Jerusalem a grand revival of God's work commenced, which went on spreading into the neighbouring nations, and one which no opposition could extinguish, and martyrdom itself could not kill. Here the heralds

of the Cross received the blessed baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, which qualified them for their great and arduous task ; fitted them as nothing else under heaven could to execute their great commission, and, confronting the forces of earth and hell, to carry Christianity to the peoples of the vast Roman empire. Thus commissioned and thus prepared, they nobly carried out the gracious purpose of the Master, with the fearlessness and enthusiasm of true heroes, willing to die rather than desert their post of duty. He was Himself 'the light of the world,' doing for the spiritual world what the sun does for the natural world. But He wanted their aid in the evangelisation of the nations. He asks them therefore to go forth to enlighten and instruct men with reference to the great principles of Christianity, and to conquer them to Divine authority ; but as He would not send them a warfare at their own charge, He would Himself go with them, and be with them in every conflict, and they would always find His help equal to their necessity till the great mission on which He sent them was fully accomplished. This was the solemn pledge of the Master, and has been fulfilled in every age of the Church, and pre-eminently so in the first age of its existence. In the first age of Christianity the deep truth learnt by the Church was that 'the excellency of the power,'—in the spread and propagation of the religion of Jesus,—'was not of men but of God.' And this is a blessed truth the Church of Jesus has been learning ever since ; a truth which both humbles and exalts us, for our greatest consolation amid our weakness and difficulties is that the execution of our glorious mission is not based upon mere human might and intelligence, but the wisdom and power of God. He who commanded the Church to commence the evangelisation of the world, and to continue the evangelisation of the world till the work was complete, makes Himself responsible for success.

The aggressive character of Christianity is seen from the conduct of the apostles. Their conduct is their own comment on their commission; it shows how they understood and regarded that commission. We see their conceptions embodied in their work. 'And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.' (Mark xvi. 20.) Against the prejudice, learning, and formidable opposition of the times, the deep hatred of unholy men, and the malignity of devils, 'they went forth' at the bidding of Jesus and taught Christianity. They were not heroes in the absence of danger, with their feet comfortably to the fire, or in some enthusiastic public meeting, or in some excited committee, or in some case where it was enough to give vent to a little strong feeling. No; they risked life every day, and 'took joyfully the spoiling of their goods.' When driven out of one city by the strong hand of persecution they entered another, and there proclaimed Jesus and the resurrection. So that within a comparatively short period from the commencement of Christianity, in less than half a century in fact, 'their sound went into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world,' that is, the very extremity of the Roman empire. Before the end of the Jewish commonwealth, the breaking up of the body politic, or the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, 'this Gospel of the kingdom' had been published as a witness unto all nations wherever the Jews were scattered; and so the prediction of Jesus was accomplished. (Matthew xxiv. 14.) Christianity struck its roots deep, and sent out its branches far and wide, reaching in its influence and power Jew and Greek and Roman, and spreading east, west, north, and south, till civilised and even barbarian people got some knowledge of the Christian religion. The word of God grew and multiplied so rapidly and extensively, that in the days of Constantine it became the nominal religion of the Roman

empire. Had Christianity maintained its early power, the world had long ago been converted to Christ. We believe it will be so conquered to Christ's authority before the grand mission of Christianity is fulfilled and God's great and blessed work on earth is finally accomplished. But in order to this the glorious Gospel of Jesus must be preached in the entire habitable globe and to every creature under heaven. Every fallen son of Adam must hear in his own tongue the wonderful works of God, and personally receive the intelligence of salvation by a Redeemer. And looking at the work so auspiciously commenced by Christ and His apostles, it seems likely Christianity will do what it proposes. We see strong reasons why the Church should be hopeful, shake herself from all indifference and sluggishness, arise and shine in her purity and power, and in her zeal and by all possible evangelising efforts, diffuse the light she has received from her glorious Lord and Head, especially since now her light has come in its fulness and the glory of the Lord has risen upon her in its highest splendour.

We have now reviewed the three Dispensations, and have seen that Christianity is a religion for the world. So far we are certain of one thing,—Christianity has come into the world to do its beneficent work. What sort of reception will it meet with? and how will it get on? It was by a slow and protracted process that it grew into permanent form and substance. Will it be by any analogous process that it will gain recognition and extension? Through much unfaithfulness on the part of the Church, and through much opposition on the part of the world, God's plans were gradually but surely developed till the Christian Dispensation was eventually established. Will the future resemble the past in these aspects, or will God adopt another policy? What if it turn out that Christianity has to fight its way slowly but surely till it ultimately triumphs; like

the advancing tide, which seems to be receding and not advancing as each wave is sucked back again into the ocean, yet if we look at it long enough we are certified of the real fact, and know that the tide is coming in and not going out. Will there be in Christianity a splendid high tide in millennial glory, though winds are sometimes contrary and men in their unbelief and folly construct all sorts of breakwaters? If it come, how, and when, and by whom? We must wait. God often rebukes our impatience, and yet marches on in His glory and majesty.

Enough for us to know in the meantime that the world though fallen is redeemed, and is to be won for Christ by the agency of the Church. When we look at the magnitude of the work, and contemplate the difficulty of its accomplishment, we say, Will it ever be done? The anxious, loving, Christian heart asks again and again in many forms, Will Christ ever really be king universal, swaying the sceptre of His authority over an actually regenerate race? Is it simply a beautiful dream, or will the theory be translated into fact? To a large extent it is for Christian men and women to answer the question; for it rests with Christians whether or not God's gracious purpose shall be carried out. He has done His part, and is prepared, is, in fact, solemnly pledged to co-operate with His people in the spread of the Gospel. It is for the Church to do her duty, and so speedily bring about what is ever dear to the heart of Christ. If Church work be neglected, the conversion of the world to Christ may be indefinitely delayed. It is not to say because it is postponed that it will be ultimately prevented. This, however, belongs to future discussion. Up to this point we see God has contributed His share of influence and effort toward the spiritual elevation of the world, and placed His infinite resources at the disposal of the Church. So that the conversion of the world resolves itself into this sort of inquiry,—Shall we contribute our effort and influence toward

the evangelisation of the race? There is no danger of failure on the Divine side; the only danger lies on the human side. If we determine in the strength of grace to do our duty, then, by God's help, the salvation of the world will be effected, sooner or later His glorious kingdom will be everywhere established. But what we do we must do quickly, do with heart and energy, do it out of deep, strong love to Christ and the souls purchased by His blood; not forgetting while we delay and hesitate our fellow men are perishing by thousands.

Chapter II.

OPPOSITION TO CHRISTIAN AGGRESSION.

IT is scarcely necessary to refer to the opposition offered to Christian aggression under the earlier Dispensations, as they were not strictly and properly aggressive in their nature. It is well understood that 'the carnal mind' has always been 'enmity against God,' in every age, in every land, and under every Dispensation. It was as much a truth in earlier times as in our own, that 'they who are in the flesh cannot please God.' Infidelity appears to have taken complete possession of the descendants of Cain. The wickedness of the antediluvians is proverbial; and everybody knows the opposition they offered to the preaching of Noah. God is represented as actually grieving over the degeneracy of that age, and repenting that He had made man; and even He seems to have had no alternative but sending the deluge to rid the world of its polluted inhabitants.

It is also a well understood fact that the Jewish people offered strong opposition, in many ways and on many occasions, to the truths and principles of Divine revelation. God was grieved with them forty years in the wilderness; and afterwards they frequently showed themselves a stiff-necked, disobedient, and gainsaying people. In the course of their history they often relapsed into idolatry, and worshipped the gods of the countries they conquered, though they were especially called, in their national character, to keep up the knowledge and worship of the one true God. Such was Jewish opposition to the truth and authority of

Jehovah, that prophet after prophet bitterly mourns over the nation; and Isaiah, in the deepest discouragement, says, 'Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' as if the people were universally opposed to truth and righteousness. From first to last the great bulk of the people were ungrateful, unloving, unbelieving, openly rebellious, inclined proudly and selfishly to monopolise the Divine favour, and disposed to look upon themselves as the only true Church of God, essential to the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham, thinking God would have no Church to carry out His purposes were they destroyed, and as if God could not possibly have any imaginary interest in any people but them. Upon this they presumed, and in this they increasingly prided themselves, especially as the advent of Christ drew near, and He actually appeared and began to preach and teach in the midst of them.

Coming down to the time when the essentially aggressive character of Christianity became fully manifest, the bitterest possible opposition was offered to its principles and progress. At first Christianity seemed to stand alone, a friendless and neglected thing. Comparatively few embraced it, fewer still had the necessary courage to speak in its favour; for the fact is, at one time the disciples themselves seem completely to have lost heart, forsook Christ and fled, shrank from an open acknowledgment of Him, and were really 'scattered every one to his own,' and left 'Him alone,' Peter point-blank denying all knowledge of Him, and to make bad worse, doing it with oaths and curses. Just a few women remained true to Christ in that great crisis of His history, faithfully clinging in ardent attachment to the cause and character of Jesus. True to their nature, and especially to sanctifying grace, they were prepared to run some risk; and so they were last at the cross and first at the sepulchre. But looking at the whole

circumstances of the trial and crucifixion of Christ, all appeared to argue ill for the infant Church of Jesus. One sad omen came crowding thick and fast upon the heels of another, the plot in the terrible drama thickening fearfully day after day. But by-and-by, when the first rude shock had gone, and the disciples had fairly gained their feet; when the unexpected severity of the persecuting storm had partially blown over, and they had a brief opportunity of recollecting themselves,—those brave and noble men gathering up their courage, manfully returned to the combat: like a panic-stricken army, surprised by the enemy, and taken at a great disadvantage, after sustaining a partial defeat, retreats, reforms, and returns to the charge with a sort of superhuman energy and a deadlier onslaught than before. We must not too harshly blame the disciples for this first signal failure in the performance of duty. As yet they did not fully comprehend their position, or clearly understand the teaching of the Master. They needed the enlightenment and strengthening grace of the Holy Spirit. In a little time they would better see the meaning of Christianity, and be prepared to suffer the loss of all things for Christ, giving life itself for His sake. But as yet they clung to the idea of a theocratic Messiah, were weak and confused in their reasoning; and Christ felt obliged to be reticent in His teaching, keeping back many things as to the future course of events relating to His kingdom, because ‘they were not able to bear them.’ This appears to have been the reason why up to this point He could not trust them with any mission to the Gentiles. They were not then fitted for the controversies that were sure to follow. Being immature in knowledge, experience, and character, we must not censure them too severely, while we frankly admit that it was indeed a sad beginning for the infant Church.

Christianity was opposed by the Jewish government. The

authorities of the nation tried hard to put it down. They induced Pilate to condemn Christ, evidently against his honest convictions, for he told them that he found nothing in Jesus worthy of death. They appear to have thought that the death of Christ would be the complete overthrow of His religion; and therefore if they could only conveniently get Him put to death, that would end the whole troublesome disturbance about Christianity. So they sent out their spies, and with a cleverness worthy of Jesuits distorted facts to give colourable excuse to His unrighteous crucifixion. But the death of Jesus did not remove the difficulty as they expected. It gave vitality and power to the Christian cause. Christianity became much more the subject of common conversation, and more rapidly and extensively spread. The disciples published the truths and principles of the Gospel on every hand. What was to be done? It became exceedingly doubtful whereunto this new movement would grow, and a very perplexing question for government to know how to act under the circumstances. They had power, and so would prohibit teaching in the name of Jesus. One cool, wise, strong head stoutly protested against this repressive policy; intimating his conviction that if the work were of men it would sure enough come to nought, but if it were of God, it would be a serious thing to be found fighting against Him. But heedless of consequences, they chose the terrible alternative, and put a ban on the Christian preachers. Notwithstanding this prohibition, Christianity was proclaimed to the people. For the violation of this persecuting law the apostles were dragged before the city authorities, who most indignantly inquired, 'Did we not straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood upon us.' (Acts v. 28.) The simple reply was, 'We ought to obey God rather than

men.' The apostles could not silence their consciences, kill their religious convictions, and live comfortably in the known neglect of duty to God. They were subject to a higher authority than mere human government, plainly said so, and acted upon the belief; and the Jewish government had to do what all governments have had to do ever since when they have dared to oppose Christianity, either willingly or unwillingly yield to the superior force centring in the Gospel of God. Truth and right are stronger than material force.

Christianity was opposed by the Jewish people. Going from the rulers to the multitude, we find the same deep-rooted hatred to Christianity. Their prejudices, their education, their apparent honour and interests were against Christianity and in favour of Judaism. To renounce Judaism and embrace Christianity would in their thinking be to give up a splendid ritual, a most gorgeous and imposing temple service, which, to say the least, met in many sensuous persons the natural love of scenic display, all of which was hallowed to them by the associations of the past. It would also be to believe that their city and temple were foredoomed to destruction, and that the long-established customs of Moses, their own special and peculiar prophet, were to be changed by Jesus of Nazareth, and a most simple and unpretentious spiritual worship substituted,—like going from Romanism or ritualism to plain Presbyterian worship. The people had to break with the past, to give up their carnal ideas of a temporal Messiah, to submit to faith in a Galilean peasant, who had been crucified by the successors and representatives of Moses. And looking at all this with the knowledge of what human nature is, the wonder seems to be that Christianity should have made any progress at all; and it never could have succeeded against all kinds and forms of opposition had it not been Divine in its origin. There was the Pharisee contending for ritualism, and so

opposing Christianity because it destroyed the merit of mere forms and ceremonies, and introduced a most simple spiritual life and worship. There was the Sadducee contending for materialism, denying the existence of angel or spirit, and so opposing Christianity because it taught the resurrection of the dead and a future state of existence. In fact, Christianity was opposed by all sects and parties in turn, from every conceivable motive and by every possible argument. The fickle multitudes who followed Christ did so, not from sympathy with His cause, but 'because they did eat of the loaves and were filled.' So having no community of belief or principle they were ready to cry hosanna one day, and crucify Him the next. Led on by priests and rulers, too excited to think, and at the same time blinded by ignorance and prejudice, they persecuted the apostles as they had done the blessed Master before. The popular voice and will opposed the Gospel of Jesus by all the means and resources at command. Earth and hell were moved to destroy it. But it survived, and has lived through all kinds of opposition from the masses of the people from that day to this ; opposition arising from the circumstances of the people as well as from fallen, corrupt human nature itself.

Christianity was opposed by the powers of darkness. First, the devil made a desperate assault on the Son of God in the wilderness of Judæa. We have often been struck with that singular and severe temptation. It was a sore trial to Christ Himself. We know not what would have been the result to the Saviour and the Church had not angels ministered unto Him, or His human nature been strengthened by its mysterious connection with the Divine. There is one aspect of that temptation peculiarly applicable to the subject under consideration. We are told that the devil tried to dazzle Christ with the glory of easy and complete conquest. 'The devil taketh Him up into an exceeding

high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world; and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.' As much as to say, They are all in my undisputed possession; I am the god of this world, and will yield them up to Thee without a struggle if Thou wilt fall down and acknowledge my greatness. But that would have been to make Christ's kingdom of this world instead of spiritual and heavenly in its character; so the Saviour bruised Satan beneath His feet, and triumphantly repelled this last fiery dart. 'It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' (Matthew iv. 10.) And a vanquished foe the devil fled. But it was only to make other fearful assaults upon Jesus afterwards and then upon the Church. In reading the Gospels we often meet with cases of demoniacal possession; as if Satan were specially permitted during the ministry of Jesus to oppose the progress of Christianity; but He conquered Satan in this way, and cast the devils out of the people. Paul says, later on in the history of the Church, 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' (Ephesians vi. 12.) Evil spirits do most certainly exist, and they have from time to time brought all their combined force to bear against the truth as it is in Jesus, and have done everything in their power to crush and cripple the Church in her aggressive movements. Satan no doubt commands a vast host of inferior spirits, fallen and outcast like himself. He has still the intellect of an angel; cleverly conceives and energetically executes every plan of attack on the army of Christ. When beaten at one point he makes an assault in some other direction; and though he may lose one battle he soon plans another. The Church of Jesus has had to wage war with the devil from the beginning, and will have to do so down

to the latest generations. But the victory cannot be considered doubtful for one moment, since the Captain of our salvation, who has already beaten Satan on his chosen battlefield, leads on the army of the Church.

Christian aggression was opposed by Judaizing and false teachers. Many Jewish Christians contended for the strict observance of the ceremonial law. They taught that circumcision was essential in the case of Gentile converts to Christianity. Paul, as the Apostle of the Gentiles, especially opposed such teaching, contending for a freer and broader Christianity, a Christianity perfectly unfettered by Levitical law. But the Judaizing teachers, who could not rise so completely out of Judaism as Paul had done, were constantly creeping into the Churches planted by Paul, and trying to lead the converts from the simplicity of the Gospel back to legalism. Many of these Judaizing teachers appear to have had comparatively little sympathy with the Gospel, and only believed in Christianity in the narrow sense that Jesus was a temporal Messiah, who would soon come back to earth and establish the theocratic kingdom. And when Christianity spread much among the Gentiles it encountered opposition from Gentile philosophy. The excessive love of knowledge on the part of many made them regard Christianity as a thing simply for the lofty exercise of intellect. The apostle had to confront men who got into the Church and preached the efficacy of wisdom and knowledge, a Christianity of intellectual refinement and culture, but producing no moral change either in heart or life. To meet the case of all parties Paul clung to the doctrine of the atonement, and would know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and Him as crucified; not a Gospel of Grecian culture on the one hand, or Jewish ceremonialism on the other, but simple faith in the death of Christ as the basis of justification before God and Divine life in Jesus. Those who have carefully gone over the epistles of

the New Testament, and in connection with them carefully read early Church history, must have been impressed with the numerous parties opposing the pure Gospel, and the peculiar and ever changing methods in which they sought to adulterate and impede the truth of Christ. The apostles were sorely tried with the imperfect views, the selfish designs, the corrupt motives and purposes of the false advocates of Christianity in the primitive Church. Some altogether misunderstood Christianity, some intentionally perverted Christianity, some embraced it and proclaimed it for personal ends. While one class of teachers explained it away, making it a kind of ideal thing, another class corrupted it by additions of their own; and so the Gospel became Jewish or Grecian or Oriental, anything or nothing, as it suited the parties concerned.

Christianity was opposed by the heathen communities among whom it was early proclaimed. It dishonoured their gods, came violently into collision with their interests and prejudices. Their craft was clearly in danger; it would destroy the work by which they got their gain. They would have to give up all their old ideas, habits, and associations. It would completely revolutionise their philosophy and change their manner of life. They were not prepared to submit to all this. So they imprisoned, mobbed, and murdered the apostles of Jesus. If persecution could have killed Christianity, it would have done so in early times, and the Gospel would never have come down to us. If the most formidable opposition of earth and hell could really hinder the ultimate triumph of Christianity, Christianity would never have succeeded at all. For Christian advocates there is this comforting reflection, that there cannot possibly be any new kind of opposition to meet in the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. The Gospel has already gone among the most civilised and the most barbarous peoples; it did so, in fact, in the very first century

of Christianity, rousing passion the most fearful, grappling with thought the most subtle and profound, breaking down self-interest of the strongest power and the longest duration; it has met and overcome opposition of head and heart and life, and we cannot conceive of any form of opposition that Christianity will henceforth have to contend against which did not exist in apostolic times.

Passing by dreary centuries of opposition to Christian aggression, opposition in multiplied forms from kings and peoples, philosophers and scholars, politicians and historians, mistaken friends and avowed enemies, the malignity of fallen Churches and the ill instructed zeal of true Churches, we find in the systems and circumstances of our own times deadly antagonism to the world's evangelisation. There is modern opposition, as real and formidable as ancient opposition, connected by the evil and darkness of the Middle Ages. To-day, for instance, Atheism is boldly and unblushingly affirming that there is no God; Pantheism is denying the personality of God, and strongly asserting that nature is God or that 'the all' is Divine; Deism is denying the revelation of Scripture, and resting in the sufficiency of reason and the revelation of nature; Naturalism is denying God's providential government, and looking at the world as left exclusively to the control of natural law; Unitarianism is denying the three-one God of Scripture, and preaching a mere intellectual and social Gospel. These and many kindred systems of modern doubt are strongly opposed to the spread of evangelical Christianity. In this age many men of lofty and cultivated intellect, especially men connected with physical science, are quietly preaching doubt respecting many truths and principles of Christianity. We honour true science, resting on clearly ascertained facts, but decline to accept mere assumption or illogical reasoning based upon facts. Some of the more popular forms of intellectual opposition to

Christian aggression demand a more distinct and detailed notice.

One of the present forms of opposition to Christianity is Secularism. This it is well known is a popular form of infidelity. Periodically infidelity has been under the necessity of changing its name and mode of attacking Christianity. This we regard as unmistakable evidence of its inherent weakness. Formerly men coarsely and openly called themselves infidels. Now they seek a better sounding name, and stab Christianity in the dark. The people in these days are to be led away from Christianity cautiously and unsuspectingly. Secularism, as its name indicates, aims at spreading a purely worldly spirit over society generally, and endeavours to draw the human heart from all that is sacred and heavenly. We are plainly told by the advocates of Secularism that 'what is first in point of certainty is first in point of importance.' They very conveniently take for granted that the present life is more certain than the future one. Without so much as stopping a moment or two to demonstrate this, and make the ground sure on which they take their stand, they try to lead men to bend all their energies toward the present life, and so to disregard the teachings of One who said, 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.' Not Jesus but George Jacob Holyoake is to be followed as the safe and unerring guide for tradespeople and the working classes in secular matters. 'Attention to temporal things,' we are told, 'should take precedence of considerations relating to future existence'; and again, 'that science is the providence of life, and spiritual dependence in human affairs may be attended with material destruction.' The drift of Secularism is to produce worldly-mindedness, and to induce people to renounce all connection with Christianity, which secularism tries hard to persuade them is the deadly enemy of their temporal interests. It is evident enough that such teaching is very flattering to

the worldly nature of man, which is fearfully estranged from God and steeped in selfishness to begin with. And consequently Secularism has met with a too ready reception among the working population of our towns and cities. It tells the poor men of the age that Christianity is the enemy of their social advancement and comfort. It tells tradesmen that Christianity is the barrier to their fortune-building. It tells statesmen that Christianity impedes wise and beneficial legislation. Secularism is to give back to man his lost paradise. It is only Christianity, the Secularist modestly intimates, which is the bane of the nation's prosperity. It needs no great sagacity to perceive that in certain quarters Secularism is likely to prove a formidable foe to Christian aggression. It may not now have the hold it had upon working men. But it still lives and acts, directly and indirectly. We are especially sorry it should have poisoned the minds of the hard-handed sons of toil, stinging the hearts of those for whom Christianity is peculiarly fitted and intended: for if Christianity be the religion of any class of society, it is the poor man's religion. 'The poor have the Gospel preached to them'; and 'God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of His kingdom.' Had Christian men been wise as serpents and harmless as doves, they would not have permitted Secularists so extensively to get hold of mechanics' institutions and co-operative societies. Christianity has a special mission to the poor and necessitous, of which we shall have something to say in due course.

*What Secularism has been trying to accomplish in the world, Rationalism has been attempting to bring about in the Church; and while one has been spreading among the working classes, the other has been spreading among ministers and in literary circles. The publication of *Essays and Reviews* some years ago produced a sensation through the country; but that notorious book was not the origin of*

neology in England, it was simply the indication of the hold it had taken of many minds. It was the disclosure of a melancholy fact, but a fact nevertheless. Now Rationalism is only another name for Socinianism, or a very low form of Unitarianism. It denies the proper deity and godhead of Jesus, and consequently denies His mediatorial work. It denies the proper deity and godhead of the Holy Spirit, and consequently denies His regenerating work. It makes the Christ of history into a good man, and the Holy Ghost into a mere influence or attribute of God. It tells us that Scripture is only inspired as the poems of Milton were. It asserts that there is much natural goodness in human nature, and that the evil is rather apparent than real. That evil is only on the surface of the heart, which naturally brings forth good, noble, and beautiful deeds. Only think of these sentiments spreading among clergymen of the Established Church, aye, and spreading among Dissenting and Nonconformist ministers, and, we fear, spreading far more extensively than people generally are aware or willing to believe. We rejoice to know that there are thousands of British ministers who yet hold and preach evangelical Christianity, and hope that the worst days of Rationalism are past, while we have some fear for the future. But whatever the immediate future may be, we cannot but mourn over the fact that Rationalism has affected so many minds of a class capable of offering formidable opposition to pure, simple, spiritual Christianity. We do not in the least fear for the ultimate triumph of Gospel truth, but think that in the meantime deism may naturally and extensively spring from the system we have briefly described. And in this instance Christ is wounded in the house of His friends. Christian aggression is hindered in numerous instances both by the pulpit and the press. May God graciously grant that our worst fears may never be realised!

Another form of opposition to Christian aggression is

Popery. We cannot but regard Protestantism as the purest form of Christianity. We do not say that the Church of Rome has no portion of Christian truth; but we do say that the truth is so greatly mixed up with the errors of tradition as at least to be greatly lost sight of. The dogmas of Romanism are very generally understood, and need not now be fully gone into. Its rule of faith is Scripture and tradition. It believes in the mass as a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. It holds that in the sacrament of the last supper, the wafer and the wine are transubstantiated into the body and blood, soul and divinity, bones and nerves of the Son of God. It tenaciously maintains the doctrine of the invocation of saints and angels on behalf of the living and the dead. And, finally, it asserts that the work of moral and spiritual purification, unfinished on earth, is carried on and completed in purgatory. But one of the most deadly objections to Popery is this, it exalts the authority of the Church above the authority of the Bible. So that a man's mind is not his own. He cannot use his own enlightened judgment in the reading and interpretation of the Word of God. Romanism is a fearful conspiracy against all intellectual freedom and religious liberty. Its dogmas disappear before an open Bible honestly explained. And yet in Britain and America the work of the glorious Protestant Reformation is in some instances being undone, and the privileges and blessings for which our forefathers struggled and bled are being voluntarily surrendered. Rome is making converts of rich and poor, we cannot say precisely to what extent. But our wonder and sorrow scarcely know any bounds as we think of the bare possibility of the thing after the experience of Smithfield. In every way Rome is opposing Protestant Christianity. She has lost influence on the continent of Europe among the worn-out nations she has blighted and exhausted, and now seeks power

among the more vital nations which are prosperous because free and Protestant. She stoops to any organisation, identifies herself with any social or political movement, condemns and encourages Fenianism or Home Rule as the policy may best serve her purposes. Rome does marvellously little to improve the mental, moral, or social condition of her members. The most ignorant, brutal, and degraded specimens of humanity in Britain belong to her. Romanism is baptized heathenism; and is in point of fact a gigantic conspiracy against intellectual, spiritual, and political liberty. It is time the Churches and the country spoke out with clear and distinct emphasis against this terrible foe of God and man, and that action should correspond with speech.

Ritualism in the Church of England is essential Popery; 'a new form of Popery,' as the late Dr. Dixon called it. After carefully reading for several years on the subject we can come to no other conclusion. The Ritualists make no secret of their intense dislike to Protestantism. They are not very honest or honourable, as they eat Protestant bread and do the work of Rome. We feel some degree of respect for men who declare they are of opposite views and convictions, and declare consequently they feel bound to leave the Protestant Church and to associate themselves with the Church of Rome; but no language is too strong to utter in condemnation of the Romanising party in the English Church. By the circulation of Romish literature, by the teaching of Romish doctrines, and by means of the Confessional, they are doing their utmost to lead the Church of England and the English people back to Romanism. This sort of thing has been going on secretly for years, and now it is openly and unblushingly done. A few speeches in Parliament, a few newspaper articles, an occasional sermon or pamphlet will not stop the movement. Nothing but hard, evangelistic work will do it, continuous, energetic, self-sacrificing toil to enlighten and save the young

and the aged. If we are not prepared to do this we must make up our minds in a few generations that our country shall be subject to the slavery of Rome. Yes; people say in their easy going way, But England will never stand that. England has stood a good deal of late; and so far as any real preventive work goes seems likely to stand a great deal more. Mere talk at excited meetings does precious little; there must be well organised effort on the part of every Protestant community, and that effort must be ceaseless, like the efforts of the Ritualists and the Romanists, or the day is lost.

There is opposition to Christian aggression from the platform, the press, and the pulpit. Lecturers are going through the country, and either professedly lecturing against Christianity, or constantly giving side-thrusts at the Gospel. They are open and coarse in their opposition, or cautious and subtle. But abusive and Jesuitical as is the platform, the licentiousness of the press goes greatly beyond the licentiousness of the platform. There are books and periodicals published whose very touch is defilement. These periodicals are probably doing more to corrupt the morals of the rising generation than all other institutions are doing to save and bless the youth of our country. It is difficult to sell pure literature, but easy to dispose of periodicals and books of an opposite character for the young, and for adults too, for the most part. Newsagents speak pretty unanimously on these points in town and country. And from many of the pulpits of the land there is constantly preached a perverted Gospel, which is really no Gospel at all. The very foundation of sound morals is swept away, for the authority of Scripture is made to give way to the authority of reason, or of science often falsely so called. The early errors with which Christianity was confronted are revived in modern times with a growth and dress peculiar to this age. And when we think of this terrible array of oppo-

sition to Christianity in its purity and saving power, our heart almost sinks. It is enough to make a seraph weep. Talk of David weeping because men did not keep God's law, the wonder is that our eyes are ever dry. In this enlightened land and boasted Christian age there is every kind and form of opposition to spiritual religion, and that opposition intensified and embittered by the very knowledge of God that the people possess. For Christianity either makes people better or worse, either succeeds in assimilating them to the pure and lofty nature of Jesus, or else they become tenfold more the children of hell than before.

Beside all these false systems of religion or corrupt forms of Christianity, we must add the colossal systems of heathenism, Buddhism, Brahmanism, and every other ism or element, whether refined and subtle or gross and revolting, that opposes the pure Gospel of Jesus. The gigantic religions of the East are hoary with age and lofty in intellect, but not to be compared with the philosophy of the Gospel. And all that is false to Christ and false to humanity must be ranged on the side of evil, and looked at as the enemy of the Cross of Christ; from a cruel and sensual Moham-medanism, yet preaching the grand truth that God is one, to the most debasing polytheism which changes the truth of God into a lie, worshipping the creature instead of the Creator. Whatever in theory or practice is opposed to Christian truth and righteousness is necessarily opposed to the world's evangelisation. Those who are not really with Christ are really against Christ, and they who do not truly gather with Christ do most certainly scatter abroad. The same tree cannot produce good and evil fruit, the same fountain cannot send forth pure and polluted streams, and all religions cannot be alike good and ranged on the side of Christianity.

These are some of the forms of opposition with which Christianity has to contend in the present day. We have

reason to fear for its immediate success and prosperity, unless something can speedily be done to roll back the tide of Infidelity, Rationalism, and Popery; and something done, too, to stem the torrent of wickedness which has set in from an ungodly press and platform. But above and beyond all this, infinitely more than all this, we fear other things connected with the Church herself. We fear the indifference, the deadness, the formality of the Church, fear numerous things within the Church far more than all that exists outside the Church. We would not by any means underrate the doings of the Church, but gladly acknowledge her efforts in every department of service, in sending thousands of missionaries to the heathen; in employing thousands of ministers in the home work; in thrusting out a host of Scripture readers, town and city missionaries, Bible women; in the establishment of Bible societies, tract societies, benevolent societies, and various philanthropic institutions. All these are no doubt mighty engines of good, and we cannot but be profoundly thankful for their existence, that ever the great, loving God put it into the hearts of His people here, that while goodness is very active, badness is intensely active too; and, consequently, there is all the greater need for the Church to become additionally energetic herself.

If we narrowly look at the character of the members composing the Church of the age, do we not too commonly find *an intensely worldly spirit*? Compared with the primitive Christians and our own forefathers, the Puritans and early Methodists of England, and the grand old Covenanters of Scotland, do we not find far greater proximity to the world in spirit and conduct? The age in which we live we know is altogether different. Men are not now hunted to death, burned at the stake, or assailed with rotten eggs and brickbats as they used to be; but they are

assaulted in a far more deadly way, with a subtle, worldly spirit, and a passion for becoming suddenly rich. The world appears to threaten to swallow up the Church, to absorb everything sacred and holy and heavenly. The broad and palpable distinction between the Church and the world is in danger of being broken down and lost. Christianity seems to be looked upon too much as a thing for the Sabbath and the sanctuary merely, to be dispensed with during the week, laid aside till the Sabbath comes round again. And yet Christians are required to be lights of the world, cities set upon hills, living epistles read and known of all men, salt of the earth, and angels of mercy to their fellows. It is the omission of undoubted duty, the neglect of all this, the sad failure to maintain a distinctive Christian profession and spirit which we fear more than anything else. The unfaithfulness of the Church which sinks her distinctive character and merges it into the character of the world, to a large and painful extent, seems to us more to be feared than all the opposition brought to bear against the Church from beneath and from the earth. If the distinctive character of the Church be lost, and people see little or no difference between Christians and men of the world, then Jeremiah may sorrowfully exclaim : ' Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people ' ; and the priests or ministers of the most high God may weep between the porch and the altar, praying in brokenness of spirit, ' Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach.' But if Christians maintain their character as the representatives of religion on earth, we do not fear all the opposition that can be brought to bear against the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. It will, as it did when first planted in Judæa, grow and multiply, prevail over all kinds and forms of opposition again, and nothing will be able to withstand its

heavenly energy, being 'mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.'

There is great opposition offered to Christian aggression by the unbelief of the Church. Christian men and women get into the way of mournfully looking at the difficulties of the Church, till they appear to have far more faith in the power of difficulties than they have in the power of God. A missionary's wife was dying in Fiji, the tribes were at war, and there was no white man nearer than seventy miles, and the heart of the missionary was sinking within him. His noble dying wife said to him, 'My dear, how can you doubt God! is He not Almighty?' Many in the Church look at difficulties more than they look at God's omnipotence, the omnipotence of His grace and lovingkindness. With regard to many Christian people, if unbelief would remove mountain difficulties it would be done. Evidently still Christ cannot do many mighty works of grace many miracles of conversion, because of unbelief. People say, Aye, but the church or chapel is surrounded by a low, ignorant population; it is in a very bad locality; there are so many Irish there; everything is unfavourable, and we can never get on in such a neighbourhood; we must really beat a retreat, and go where we are likely to succeed better. If the Saviour and the apostles had gone away from evil neighbourhoods Christianity would never have reached us. The mission of Christianity is specially to the neglected and abandoned. The worse people are the more they need our efforts. We ought first to go to those who need us most. If the Church turns cowardly and runs away as fast as she can from a few difficulties, and in unbelief forsakes all bad localities, leaving the devil to have all his own way in such places, then the Lord have mercy on her, and help her speedily to repent and do her first works.

Opposition again is offered by nominal Christianity. There are thousands who will neither enter the kingdom of God

themselves nor suffer others who would. With affectionate fidelity we are bound to say that such people are a dead weight upon the Church, an unspeakable drag upon the chariot wheels of Christianity. Those who sit year after year under the preaching of the Gospel, and yet year after year reject Jesus and trample upon His loving authority, have tremendous guilt lying at their door, and a fearful account to render by-and-by. They have to answer to God for the effects of their conduct, not only upon themselves, but upon other people; for the consequences of keeping the heralds of the Cross proclaiming Christ to them and urging Christianity upon their acceptance, when they ought years ago to have capitulated and allowed the ambassadors of Christ to have proceeded to other enemies in the regions beyond, beseeching them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. Were all our moral, charitable, respectable, and in very many respects altogether unobjectionable church and chapel-going people soundly converted to God, and heartily working for the spread of Christianity, the world would soon present a vastly improved appearance. And the guilt of this remaining undone to-day lies greatly at the door of men having the form of godliness but denying the power thereof.

Great opposition is offered to the free course of the Gospel by the deep depravity of the human heart. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. It is one of the terrible strongholds of the devil. And Christianity goes to the heart, does its work there, successfully grapples with the foe in his own fortifications, and binds the strong man of the house hand and foot and casts him out. But when Christianity has succeeded in planting itself in the depraved human heart, it is not without great difficulty that it keeps the soul won and the territory conquered for Christ. The heart is to be feared more than all outward enemies. Hence we are to watch and pray that we enter not into

temptation, and especially to watch the wild wanderings of desire, the outgoings of an evil heart, and to keep our spirits with all possible diligence. The best of men frequently find after they have resolved and re-resolved, vowed and vowed again to render to the Lord a perfect service, their hearts lead them astray. They lamentably fail to perform their clear duty. Though the vows of God are upon them, their vows most solemnly and sincerely made are forgotten and broken. 'Greatest of all my foes,' said one, 'I find the enemy within'; and this is a sentiment endorsed by the experience of millions.

Evil example likewise opposes and hinders the progress of the Gospel. Example is a most powerful monarch, a potentate ruling with iron hand and unbending will. Custom is the sovereign of society. Fashion is queen everywhere. And in the evil habits established universally we see something like an omnipotent despot, swaying all but an absolute sceptre over fallen humanity. It is not an easy thing to estimate fully and correctly the mighty influence of evil example. It is at once powerful to impel men onward in the ways of wickedness, and powerful to deter them from acts of Christian aggression; strong to prevent the accomplishment of good, and equally strong to help on the progress of unrighteousness. Men very easily go with the stream, but with considerable difficulty make headway against a strong current. And if we speak of the evil example of our own times it is fearful to contemplate. Sabbath breaking, drunkenness, prostitution, every kind and character of outward immorality, marches onward with steady step and brazen brow. In ten thousand ways the rising race is quickly initiated into the habits and practices of ungodliness by the evil example so transparent around them.

The devil takes advantage of everything that serves his purpose, going about as 'a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.' As we have previously intimated, he is the immu-

table foe of Christian aggression. He opposed it with all his evil energy and hellish nature when being first established in Judæa. And to this very day he is the sleepless and unchangeable adversary of God and man; and a subtle and powerful adversary he is. He skilfully fortifies and strengthens every weak fortress he may hold against Christ. He makes a bold and daring attack upon the weak and unguarded parts of the Redeemer's army. He leaves no place without storming it, no weakness of character, no failing of head or heart or life but he bombards, and eternity alone will fully disclose in how many instances he has been completely successful!

Now all that we have stated but forms the merest outline, the most meagre representation possible of what Christianity has to struggle against in its endeavours to save and bless the race. It is therefore not to be wondered at that Paul should strongly urge the Christians of his day to pray 'that the Word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified.' In this great conflict going on between good and evil the Church must summon all her energies. Since such overwhelming opposition, opposition of every conceivable sort, and from every conceivable source, is brought against Christianity, the Church must tax her strength, her ingenuity, and her resources to the uttermost to accomplish her glorious mission. There is no reason under heaven why goodness should be less fruitful of plans and efforts than badness. Right and conscience and good men and angels and God are on our side; and so with unwavering constancy and undaunted courage we must proceed in our proper work. 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' Evil is undoubtedly strong, but goodness is stronger. The devil is a great adversary, but Christ is an omnipotent Saviour. The foes of Christianity are

numerous, but they are sure to be defeated. Brace yourselves then for the battle. The trumpet of the Gospel calls you to arms. On your faithfulness everlasting interests are made to depend. Shall Christ find in you soldiers worthy of His holy and noble cause, or cowards and idlers only? He is personally looking on the whole scene of the Church's conflict. For His sake and for the sake of those He has bought by His blood, never turn your back on the enemy. Never for a moment quit your post of duty. Die rather than leave the place of danger. Coward hearts are not for these times. Indifference is a dishonour impossible to wipe off by thousands of prayers and tears. Intense earnestness must fire every breast. And with such a cause and such men to carry it on we stay not to calculate the numbers against us, but steadily march on to victory. Devils and men, earth and hell will all be completely subdued. Those who will not accept mercy through Jesus must submit to His punishing power, and kneel in humble prostration at His feet. He will be universal Conqueror, but mostly by love that will ultimately win the nations. Better kneel in humble submission before Christ now, than be compelled to prostrate yourselves before Him at the judgment.

Chapter III.

THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY.

WE believe the conquest of Christianity will one day be complete. It is ultimately destined to achieve a glorious victory over all forms and degrees of opposition. The mediatorial reign of Jesus will be one of growing power, and then of final triumph over all His enemies. Having commenced His redeeming work and august reign, He will not be defeated and disgraced. No dishonour will at last gather around His fair brow. The laurels of conquest are sure fully to encircle His exalted head. He has undertaken as our Saviour and King to establish His kingdom in the earth, and will no doubt proceed till He has universally done it. This was the subject of ancient promise and prophecy. For the accomplishment of this many looked and waited with intense longing for ages, but were perpetually doomed to painful and perplexing disappointment. The Divinely appointed time had not come. The sun gradually rises in the heavens, and midday does not come immediately after the dawn. There must be the blade, then the ear, and not till after that the full corn in the ear. There must first be the growth of the plant, then the bud, and afterwards the full-bloom flower. God always works by slow stages and patient methods. The Saviour said to the men of His time: 'Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and

have not heard them.' (Matthew xiii. 16, 17.) They were things for other eyes to witness and for other hearts to gladden. But now the fulness of the ages had come, and so 'God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' (Galatians iv. 4, 5.) The incarnate Redeemer came forth in lowliest aspect, but with might and grace equal to the undertaking, 'to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage' of the most cruel and degrading character: came to make an end of sin, to arrest Satan in his fatal progress, to take from the destroyer his cruel power, to overthrow and lay low in the dust the empire of evil, and to found a pure and beneficent kingdom, leading all rebels against the throne of God to complete subjection by the power of truth and love. As a warrior, with blood-soiled garments, returning from the slaughter of His enemies, Christ is represented in prophetic vision, solitary but victorious, single-handed in the fight, but strong to triumph, with burning indignation at sin, and declaring with reference to the stoutest opponents of righteousness, 'I will tread them in Mine anger, and trample them in My fury.' (Isaiah lxiii. 1—6.)

Christ first encountered Satan and conquered him, when He was 'led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.' From this instance of victory He marched on to other successful attacks upon the kingdom of evil. Those who opposed Him in His teaching were completely silenced, confounded, and put to shame. At length, when all the hosts of hell seemed let loose upon Him, as He hung upon the cross, bleeding and dying for the race, and, either really or apparently forsaken of the Father, He had to grapple with His foes alone, He was then as before victorious, exclaiming, 'It is finished; and gave up the ghost.' The battle was terrible, but the vic-

tory was complete. He then went into the invisible world, 'spoiling principalities and powers, making a show of them openly,' manifesting Himself conqueror in hell itself, after chasing the hosts of darkness to their own place. He next conquered death in his own territory, and came forth victor over the dark domain of the grave. Then He went up to heaven in all the might and splendour of conquest:

'Cherubic legions guard Him home,
And shout Him welcome to the skies!'

There went forth peal after peal from the hosts of heaven: 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.' (Psalm xxiv. 7.) And He entered with the laurels of conquest green and fresh upon His brow. And there enthroned He sits and reigns, conducting the affairs of the empire of grace, governing the world on behalf of the Church, 'far above all principalities and powers, and every name that can be named,' and exalted thus to reign in everlasting dignity. Not until He has put down all adverse rule, authority, and power, will He deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; that through the endless ages the universe may be governed immediately and directly by the Godhead, without any distinction of person or office, 'that God may be all in all,' contemplating with joy and satisfaction His successful work, and adored by the intelligent creation in His majesty and glory.

While Christ remained on earth He organised a small army, and led it into the field to act on the offensive against the forces of Satan already occupying well chosen battleground, which was strongly fortified. The army of darkness was large and well marshalled, but essentially weak. On the day of Pentecost the first general assault was made by the army of light, and against superior numbers it was

successful; the slain and saved of the Lord were three thousand souls: and there were at that time added daily to the Church such as were saved. From that period the disciples went forth, at the command of the Master, into the different towns, cities, and countries, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and making converts wherever they went, marching from conquest to conquest like an ever victorious army. The cause of the Cross prospered against popular prejudice, opinion, law, custom, and every kind of private and public evil, almost rank as hell. And the success of these simple-minded men under such circumstances, success against the combined forces of earth and hell, demonstrates that the excellency of the power was not of men but of God. Before the revival at Pentecost Christ had only one hundred and twenty poor men and women in a little room in Jerusalem. This insignificant army constituted the whole visible force Christ possessed for the conversion of the world; and He absolutely trusted the loyal, loving hearts of those hundred and twenty poor people. Had they failed, humanly speaking, the whole enterprise of the Cross would have completely collapsed. He staked all the interests of His kingdom on the faith and love and zeal of that little company; and we know how soon this small beginning ended in great and glorious results. The apostles themselves, the most prominent actors in the Christian cause, were only a few obscure, unpretending men, without worldly influence and power. And yet, go wherever they might, signs and wonders followed their preaching: Churches were planted, societies increased, hearts and lives were conquered for Christ, and bound by strong love to His Cross. 'So mightily grew the word and multiplied.' The Jew renounced his Judaism, the Pharisee humbled his pride, the Sadducee parted with his materialism, and multitudes who had previously been without God, living all their lives before as practical atheists, began to place their

affections on things above. Paul speaking of the previous deep degradation of the Corinthians says, 'And such were some of you,'—that is, according to the context, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners,—'but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' (1 Corinthians vi. 11.) A religion which can change such people must be of God. When 'the world by wisdom knew not God,' in any saving and practical sense; when all merely human means and methods failed to elevate the world, and left the heart raw and bleeding, and hope dead in the breast,—it pleased Him 'by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believed.' The Gospel was 'the power of God to salvation to every one that believed; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.' This was the true secret of success, the one glorious cause of triumph, in the preaching of the apostles there was more than human power. God was seen and felt, and Christianity was evidently God in action. We cannot account for the early success of Christianity on any natural principle. Shut God out of the question, and its triumph is an impossibility. Paul gives the right idea, and the only adequate one, when he says, 'Of Him,' in its origin, 'and through Him,' as its efficient cause, 'and to Him,' as its final end, 'are all things,' in the Christian economy: 'to whom be glory for ever.'

The success of early Christianity we take to be an earnest and pledge of ultimate triumph. The cause of the Redeemer will finally bear down all opposition, and fill the world with truth and righteousness. For this view we are strongly disposed to contend because of the Divine origin of Christianity. If the question be put whether Christianity is from heaven or of men, it finds a satisfactory answer in the internal, external, and collateral evidence furnished by the

Gospel, but especially in the moral effects produced by Christianity. When we regard this vast mass of evidence with the same calm, impartial, and sincere spirit with which we weigh scientific and legal evidence, it must be thoroughly convincing to every one who is honestly searching for Divine truth. Every unprejudiced mind, capable of seeing and appreciating evidence, and not yet blighted by moral insanity as it turns to the consideration of Christian subjects, but quite healthy and anxious to 'know of the doctrine whether it be of God,' cannot surely reject Christianity as a 'cunningly devised fable,' a foul imposition, a dark cheat palmed upon the world in an ignorant and credulous age. If we cannot be certain that Christianity is of Divine origin, that God is really its Author, and that it is indeed the fair and beautiful offspring of the skies, then certainty is unattainable in this life. If the miracles, prophecies, and moral effects of the Bible do not demonstrate it to be from God, then demonstration is a thing unknown to mortal man. Now Christianity coming as it does from God, and being established for the purpose of saving and blessing the human race, we may reasonably conclude that the wisdom and power of God will continue to operate in the Gospel of Jesus, till He has actually accomplished the work He has Himself begun. If we suppose that God can desert His own cause, that He can for one moment abandon the Christian scheme before it is complete, we must either question the Divine origin or purpose of Christianity; must, in fact, limit the sphere of its operation, or doubt the wisdom and ability of God to carry on the work to which He has deliberately put His hand till it is perfected. And that would be as if the architect left the building half finished, as if the author left his book half published, as if the farmer left his field half reaped. Men are not guilty of such inconsistencies in ordinary life, and we cannot think God will be so inconsistent in relation to the higher interests

of spiritual Christianity. Nothing will ultimately be permitted to interfere with the completion of the Divine plan ; no opposition can effectually hinder its universal success, or else Christianity could not have survived so long. If men and devils combined could have prevented the conversion of the entire race, Christianity would have been stamped out ages ago.

Christianity is a glorious system of truth, which men never have and never can disprove, but truth communicated for the enlightenment and regeneration of the nations. Christianity is truth for the intellect and conscience, for the heart and life. Pilate asked, 'What is truth?' when Jesus spoke of a kingdom of truth. Christian truth is God's thoughts embodied in human speech for the guidance and benefit of humanity. It is the Divine representation of things as they are. Such we hold to be Christian truth historically and doctrinally considered. The very fact that Christianity actually exists on earth to-day has to be accounted for in some way or other. Here it undoubtedly is, and we may trace it back, century by century, to the apostolic age. In those early times Christianity could not be the creation of the human imagination, for the conception of the character of Christ is too lofty for those ignorant and evil days, and such a conception would imply a greater miracle of mind than all the miracles of the New Testament put together. Standing face to face, then, with the Christ of history, let us listen to His own testimony to Christianity. John is in prison, and passing under a dark cloud, he sends two of his disciples to Jesus with a distinct and definite message, to see if he can get any relief to his troubled soul : 'Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?' Christ tells them to go back and tell John what they saw and heard : the blind received their sight, the lepers were cleansed, the lame were made to walk, the dead were raised up, and the poor and neglected had the Gospel preached

to them. As if Christ had said : Now that is enough. Go and tell John that ; it will quiet his fears, and settle his doubts, and will so completely satisfy him that he will be able to bear martyrdom. Remember here, it is not as if the disciples in their love and enthusiasm claimed that Christ worked miracles : He claimed this for Himself. And if we look at the character and competence of Christ, at His clear and comprehensive intellect on the one hand, and at His elevated moral purity on the other, surely His testimony to Christianity should be decisive. If again we look at the character, competence, and number of the disciples, their testimony to the truth of Christianity is calculated to satisfy reasonable men, and must convince us that it cannot be a mere tissue of falsehood. Men would never go about risking their lives to propagate a known lie. Such a notion of human nature is absurd and preposterous in the extreme. Sceptics must be hard up for an argument when they have recourse to a thing of that sort. To say nothing of the ever accumulating evidence from profane history, from exploring expeditions to the holy land, and from books of travel, every rightly constituted mind must see that Christianity is a magnificent temple of truth, beautiful, symmetrical, of solid build, fair proportions, and majestic aspect : truth that will stand the severest test of criticism, experience, and every sort of trial, and remain at last on its own immovable foundations a pure, exalted, sublime system : truth forming a grand refuge for the nations when the creations of human genius and the speculations of the boldest intellect have all disappeared, like those houses of sand built by children on the sea-shore to be washed away by the approaching tide. But let us remember this Christian truth is to be, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, the instrument of the world's regeneration. Christ prayed just before returning to the Father, 'Sanctify them through Thy truth : Thy Word is

truth.' (John xvii. 17.) And Peter spoke of men 'being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.' (1 Peter i. 23.) There is evidently a cleansing efficacy in the truth, 'the washing of water by the Word.' (Ephesians v. 26.) And if Christian truth does not sanctify and save the world, we see nothing which can: not philosophy, not philanthropy, not education, not the arts and sciences of our boasted civilisation. Everything but scriptural Christianity has so far failed, and must always fail to change the moral aspect of society. A spiritual remedy is needed for a spiritual disease; so that the only hope of the race rests in the Gospel of Jesus, and that holy truth applied to the heart and conscience by the Spirit of God. As Christianity is God's own truth, inspired and preserved by Himself; and as the world, which is the sphere of the operation of the truth, is governed by a God who has an unchangeable love of truth and hatred of untruth, we may confidently conclude that truth in such a case will one day be completely triumphant. Truth is immortal, and will outlive error. Had it been possible to kill Christian truth, we should never have been cheered and blest by it. Men and devils have done all in their power to strangle Gospel truth. But it lives to-day, and will live till it has fulfilled its mission. Error and evil have in them a principle of decay: they cannot but rot and perish, however slow the process. But truth has a marvellous vitality, that will sustain it as the generations come and go. And as God Himself is the Author of this Christian truth, He is virtually pledged to its ultimate triumph; pledged to destroy the base metal, that the bright image of Divine truth may no longer lie concealed, but photograph itself upon the human soul universally, and so pass into men, become part of them, transform and beautify them, and fit them for the everlasting paradise.

Christianity is a system of the loftiest moral teaching. The Bible is a copy of the Divine mind, a transcript of Deity. God has impressed His own nature and image upon Christianity. There are impure things recorded in Scripture; but we must always make a distinction between what Scripture records and what it commands. What is impure is never inculcated, but forbidden and condemned. As Christianity is founded on the pure nature of God, it will live to impress its pure image on a fallen world. All moral teachers draw their light and inspiration from the Spirit and revelation of God. Divine truth by tradition has been carried over the world. The moral good in heathen writers may be traced up to its Divine source. Christ is 'the light of the world,' doing for the moral world what the sun does for the natural world. When we come to the perfected revelation of the New Testament, we see Divine claims and human duty with a clearness and force we discover nowhere else. It is in the Gospel especially we learn that 'the righteous Lord loveth righteousness.' From this we justly conclude that He will uphold and maintain moral purity until it is everywhere thoroughly established. Can we reasonably suppose that moral evil will finally triumph over moral good? Will the devil, who introduced evil into God's fair and beautiful world, be permitted to succeed in his diabolical purpose to crush out of existence the true, the pure, the lovely, and the good? Not while God is King and reigns everywhere in His own right. Surely it is impossible for Satan to triumph at last, 'for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' The mediatorial sovereignty of Jesus warrants the belief that, since 'the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil,' He will go on destroying the works of evil till He has made a complete destruction of the empire of Satan, and sees His own purity reflected in all He has redeemed by His Cross. What, you say, when Christianity has been in the world

nearly nineteen centuries? Yes; if it had been in the world nineteen million centuries. It appears to be a necessity of the Divine character and government that moral right should finally triumph over moral wrong, and that this triumph should be universal and complete. It is enough for us to know, to give us unbounded faith in the final success of Christianity, that God Himself is righteous and loves righteousness. His own nature leads Him to smile upon righteousness and help it forward, but to frown upon evil and put forth efforts to crush it. We see in such facts the guarantee of the world's conversion to Christ. When we see in Christianity a God of infinite wisdom, love, and power, we see sufficient on the side of right to secure ultimate success. It probably does not always seem as if right had sufficient power to triumph as we look at the present state of society, but appearances are often very deceptive. It seemed at one time that Napoleon could not be crushed in the continental wars, but he was. It seemed at one time that the North could not conquer the South in the American War, but it did. Sometimes to lose is to win in reality; and yet amid the mysteries of God's providential government there are times when we appear to have more faith in the success of wrong than in the triumph of right. Yes; but a righteous Redeemer will yet look down upon a righteous world, because He is righteous. 'Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before Him, and shall set us in the way of His steps.' (Psalm lxxxv. 11, 12, 13.)

The universal adaptation of Christianity to man is another reason for its ultimate triumph. It is suited to the need of men, wonderfully adapted to the vast and varied wants of the race. The world is spiritually dark, and so needs Christianity to give it light. The world is morally lost

and undone, and so needs Christianity to seek and save it. The world is impure, and so needs Christianity to renew and purify it. The world is miserable, and so needs Christianity to give it hope and joy. The world is morally dead, and so needs Christianity to quicken it into Divine life, and thereby to fit it for the glory of immortality. Christianity is absolutely necessary to rectify a thousand moral evils cursing fallen humanity. Physically, socially, and spiritually we believe Christianity is of unspeakable advantage to the race. Indeed, we are at a loss to know how the world would get on without it, believing as we do that all light and good everywhere come to men from and through Christ. In every way Christianity is needed to perfect our being physically, intellectually, and spiritually; and it is the one and only power that can do it. It sheds light upon the understanding, puts a principle of love in the heart, rectifies conscience, gives faith in truth and right; in fact, completes man's rational existence, making him feel the dignity and nobility of his nature, and so thoroughly elevating and purifying his whole being that he regains the image and favour of his great Creator. Our reason and understanding, our intuition and experience, demand a Creator; our conscience demands a Law-giver and Judge; our whole nature calls for pardon, purity, and happiness. Christianity meets these wants and instincts in a way peculiar to itself, but on a principle consistent and intelligible to us. Yes; and the Gospel alone meets and satisfies the deepest instincts, the greatest necessities, and the strongest yearnings of man's higher nature. Christianity alone can effectually promote peace, unity, goodwill, and brotherhood among the nations, preventing war and bloodshed by destroying evil passions and making men new creatures in Christ Jesus. May we not safely presume that such a religion, so necessary to man and so beneficial in its operation to society everywhere, will one

day become universal? We should imagine it is simply necessary to make out a case of universal need in order to establish our position, especially remembering the benevolence and Fatherhood of God. Indeed, looking at the great fact of redemption, we could sooner believe that the lost in perdition would finally get to heaven than that any man is coldly and deliberately excluded by God from the great salvation of the Gospel. Now, is it not likely that God will at last bring this great salvation into the actual possession and enjoyment of the whole race, since Christ died to procure it for all, and so there will be something like consistency in the work of God? Such a state of things would be a fitting conclusion to the mediatorial achievements and reign of Jesus. Nor is it a wild day-dream to anticipate such a grand and blessed consummation. Prophecy declares that 'all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God'; and, as we believe, so see it as to experience and enjoy it. We will not abandon this glorious belief and hope, since faith in the ultimate triumph of Christianity has its foundation in reason and revelation. What, is Christ to be defeated and the devil to win in the struggle between truth and error, right and wrong? Assuredly no! for He is infinitely above men, devils, and sin.

When Christianity was established, it was with the avowed twofold purpose of bringing glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and goodwill toward men. This, in fact, was the Gospel prospectus published by the angels on the plains of Bethlehem. We gather, then, pretty clearly that Christianity was intended to benefit men and honour God. Surely no one acquainted with the character and history of Christianity will deny that it effectually accomplishes both objects. It promotes the comfort and happiness of man, removes his superstitious and tormenting fears, strengthens and encourages him in a virtuous course of conduct, commands and gives him the grace to perform the manifold

duties of life, and opens up to his longing heart a glorious prospect of everlasting life when this brief and uncertain life terminates. Were Christianity allowed fairly and fully to exert itself, to live in every life, to think in every thought, to feel in every feeling, to speak in every speech, to act in every act, and to operate in every motive and principle, it would totally annihilate nine-tenths of the evils which now curse and afflict humanity. Earth would marvellously resemble heaven. 'The desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose.' As it is, many a wilderness is turned into a fruitful field. Now, supposing it only concerned the benevolence of the Deity, as exhibited in the economy of redemption, it would then seem probable that God as a God of love would extend these blessings to the whole race by the universal diffusion of the Christian religion. But His honour is at stake, His glory is involved in the business, His word is solemnly pledged to the accomplishment of this state of things; and for the glory of His own name we cannot think that the Gospel plan of saving and elevating the race will be permitted to issue in disgraceful failure. Wherever Christianity produces its blessed effects a Divine hand is seen and acknowledged, the work is admitted to be superhuman, and incapable of accomplishment by any earthly agency. The grace of God manifested in the Gospel, and transforming human lives, is celebrated in songs of praise. When the world is converted, it will be seen to be of grace, the fulness of grace producing its full legitimate effects, its most potent results; and then all will bless the name of the Lord and honour Him who liveth for ever. From the lips of a regenerated world one grand hallelujah, one unbroken chorus of harmonious thanksgiving, will go up to God. So we conclude, for the credit of His name in the Gospel plan of mercy, for the welfare of the human race which He loves, and for the glory of the one Mediator between God and men, Christianity will in the end be universally tri-

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umphant. It may be misrepresented for a time, it may be undervalued by multitudes for a time, it may appear to be ineffectual and fail to accomplish what it proposes to do for a time; but all this forms no valid argument against final and complete success. Many a noble cause on earth has completely failed in the first instance, or partially so, and perhaps languished for ages, but triumphed at last. But we are bold to assert that Christianity has never really failed in a single instance, and never can. What of human idea and passion the Church has from time to time put into her methods of propagating the Gospel may have failed, the imperfections of Christian advocates must fail; but the Gospel itself never did and never can. On the Divine side we have absolute certainty, on the human side failure and imperfection. But surely this sort of thing will not be allowed to go on for ever. Surely God will finally vindicate His government of grace, vindicate the honour of His great name and the glory of His august Son, vindicate the arrangements of His redemptive policy before angels, men, and devils; and the complete vindication of all this will be the universal display of the fulness of grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ for the whole race. The language of the Saviour will then be translated into fact: 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.' (John xii. 32.)

But the final triumph of Christianity is not mere matter of probable reasoning, thank God! We have positive prediction and promise to guide our belief and encourage our hope. Isaiah declares that 'the idols shall utterly pass away.' David assures us that the Saviour 'shall have the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.' Habakkuk plainly states 'the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' Perhaps some may be ready to say that this still leaves a previous question undecided,

whether or not such knowledge will be saving and practical in its character. If mere theoretical knowledge be all that is intended, it is difficult to see how Christianity is to do what it proposes. We have, for instance, this theoretical knowledge in Christendom to-day ; but war and bloodshed have not ceased ; and so far as we are capable of judging at present the mere theoretical knowledge of Christianity will never make men beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks. Civilisation apart from saving Christianity is mere gilded barbarism, and will always remain so. Nothing but saving Christianity, going down to the lowest depths of the human heart, and firmly rooting itself in the soil of the soul, will bring about a real and blessed brotherhood of nations. The mere knowledge of the right is no guarantee of the love and practice of the right ; and without the actual doing of the Divine will we do not see that Christianity is likely to bring back our lost paradise. The mere form of godliness, apart from its power and practice, is strongly spoken against in holy Scripture ; because Christianity is not sent to teach outward forms, but to impart proper principles of living and to give the necessary power to work out these principles in daily life. If we sincerely pray, 'Thy kingdom come,' as taught by the Redeemer, then we pray for a very different state of things from what now exists in Christendom itself ; for He immediately adds, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' In that prayer we pray for the peace, purity, love, and power of Christianity in all their superhuman beauty and energy. In this high sense no doubt it is that St. John tells us when the seventh angel shall sound there will be many voices in heaven saying, 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.' (Revelation xi. 15.) At that time we presume Christian purity will be universal as the race, since it is stated : 'Neither shall they walk any more

after the imagination of their evil hearts.' (Jeremiah iii. 17.) The purity of the Christian Church has never yet reached the exalted standard of Scripture, as 'a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.' (Ephesians v. 27.) However, the declaration of the prophet shall at length be fulfilled: 'Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of Thy God.' (Isaiah lxiii. 3.) So it seems clear that we shall finally have a pure Church and a regenerated world. For ages sin has been rampant everywhere, systems of evil have been widespread and powerful, and the means of complete cure have either been indifferently neglected or contemptuously trampled upon. But a time is coming, whether near or distant, when the Church will become holy, the numerous forms of evil will disappear, and the long-foretold and long-expected latter-day glory will be seen to be more than a grand dream, the complete subjugation of sin will be an accomplished fact. All experience and observation up to this point prove that in the most Christian country under heaven sin has so far greatly abounded, and abounded notwithstanding the greatest efforts of the Church to reclaim and regenerate the world; but when Christ actually claims the nations for His own grace will very much more abound, showing that as sin has reigned unto universal spiritual death, so grace will reign to universal spiritual life. If we properly catch the spirit of the epistle to the Romans, sin is not to be finally triumphant, but grace; and in the last period of grace, by the combined act of angels and men, Christ will be crowned as the actual Lord of all. With reference to the glory and blessedness of His spiritual reign, every loyal Christian heart says, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus; and come quickly.' Longing for that spiritual reign more than for good news from a far country, more than for the success of business plans or literary schemes, more than the sick long

for night or morning when tossing on beds of pain, more than the wife longs for the return of her husband away on some long voyage in stormy weather,—let us trust and hope and pray and toil, do, in fact, all that we possibly can to hasten the day of Christ, never weary in well doing till His kingdom come and make our earth the gate of heaven. Were we only permitted to indulge the hope of the establishment of a universal nominal Christianity, we should lose all heart and think it hardly worth the struggle, when we look at England and Europe, where nominal Christianity is already established.

From the foregoing remarks it must be admitted, in the first place, that the conversion of the whole world to Christ is possible. Because, though the world is fallen it is redeemed by the blood of Jesus. On the ground of the sacrificial offering of Christ God can pardon and accept penitent believers anywhere and everywhere. This was the very design of the great atonement, ‘that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.’ On this ground Christ commissioned His apostles to go and preach the Gospel everywhere, stating ‘he that believeth shall be saved.’ Every impediment to man’s personal reconciliation with God is taken out of the way: God can be reconciled to man, and man can be reconciled to God. Through Christ’s atonement and mediation guilty rebels may obtain grace to repent, to believe, and then to obey the Gospel; and so may live and die in the Divine favour. Beside, the scheme of redemption has been fairly tried and answered. The thing has been put to a practical test and succeeded. In every part of the world men have been truly converted by the Gospel. Man can everywhere understand the Gospel, feel its saving power, and rejoice in its glorious light and liberty. Some said it would be utterly impossible to convert Hottentots. So it would if it had been a merely human work. But ‘the things impossible with men are possible with God.’

Hottentots have been converted. In fact, men the most deeply debased and ignorant have been raised by Christianity out of their brutishness, and made partakers of the Divine nature. The cannibal Fijian has felt the humanising touch of the Gospel, and is found at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind. The Hindu and the Chinese have yielded themselves up to the influence of Christianity. The New Zealander and the backwoodsman of America have been brought to the Cross, and felt its changing power. We say, then, the conversion of the world is clearly possible; and practical men who object to rest in the theories of Christian philosophers, and want to see a thing tried and stand the test of experiment, should be satisfied that the Gospel method of elevating and regenerating men is capable of being worked. Christianity is not a mere empire of the imagination, a splendid castle in the air; but changes hate into love, uncleanness into purity, sorrow into joy, and despair into the hope of a blessed immortality. And we hold, if God can save in one place He can save in every place; if He can save a thousand He can save a world; if He can save at all consistently with His character and government, then the salvation of the world is not an impossibility. There is no physical, no intellectual, no moral or spiritual impossibility in the way of the world's conversion. Difficulties of all sorts have been overcome in the past as great as any difficulties that will have to be encountered in the future history of Christian Missions either at home or abroad.

From the foregoing it must be admitted, in the second place, that the conversion of the world to Christ is probable. Many things may be possible without being in the least probable. But we conclude it is probable the whole world will be evangelised because it is redeemed, and God Himself has actually commenced the work of the world's regeneration. He is virtually pledged to its completion: His honour, His faithful-

ness, His truth, indeed, the entire perfections of the Deity, are virtually pledged to the consummation of the mediatorial scheme. God could have had no other reason for its commencement than to carry it on to a glorious finish. He knew all the difficulties His course would have to contend with, and yet He deliberately put His hand to the blessed enterprise, and is not now about to beat a retreat. Men enter into business and fail; but God will not turn bankrupt, or prove unequal to the business He has on hand. Men organise societies that live for a time and then die out; but the Church on earth will never fail, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. Men lead armies into the field to be beaten, and to retreat in confusion and disgrace; but Christ, by the armies of the Church, is proceeding slowly but surely to the subjugation of the nations to His holy and benevolent authority. But men ask, in apparent triumph, Is it at all likely that three or four hundred millions of Christians,—and the bulk of them only Christians in name,—will ever succeed in converting to Christ between nine and ten hundred millions of people, composed of Jews, Mohammedans, pagans, and Asiatic religionists? The power which has brought one-third of the world's population under the influence of Christianity already, can as easily bring all the rest under its influence; and is doing so, not at the slow rate of past centuries, but with greater rapidity than in any previous period of the history of the Church. But when we come to look carefully at the real case it is truly marvellous. Christ began with twelve men, and in less than two thousand years the twelve have grown into millions. Not a bad proportion when we consider that only moral force has been employed to gain converts. And having so far carried on the conquest of heathendom, it is not likely the Redeemer will abandon the enterprise for which He became incarnate and bled on the cross. He is resolved to work, and the Church is resolved to work, not

only by old but by new methods too. He is quickening and sustaining His Church, and the Church is multiplying her efforts and agents for the conversion of the world. There are more numerous and varied agencies employed to-day for the conversion of the world than were ever employed in any past period of the existence of the Church. The truth of God, like leaven in the meal, is silently but effectually working in the minds and consciences of the nations, and old beliefs are passing away. Think of India, China, and Japan. The old religions are doomed, and new temples are not rising to the honour of the gods. Beside all this, think of the marvellous resources of the Church. The Church has wealth enough largely to supply the world with missionaries. The means of the Church have never yet been fairly taxed for the spread of Christianity. The Church has men, men of piety, talent, education, men of head and heart; and these might be sent out by scores and hundreds had we the means to employ laymen as well as ordained ministers. The Church by her agents already occupies the most important geographical points of heathen territory, and so possesses the key of access to the millions upon millions of unsaved men. The Church has at her command the school, the press, the pulpit, and the platform. She has mighty material helpers in steam, electricity, and things as yet undreamed of in our poor philosophy will be pressed into her service. But above all she has angels and God. And the history of the past casts some dim light upon the future, just as the lamp you hold in your hand helps you to see the path before you some little distance. The Protestant Reformation, the wonderful revival by the Wesleys, Whitefield, and their coadjutors, and modern missionary enterprise all tell us what can be accomplished. These were all the creation of the Divine Spirit. And the Holy Spirit can create other Protestant reformations, other Methodisms, other and more glorious missionary enter-

prises. Only let the Spirit come in His plenitude and power, and the Church will be quickened and energised, and a nation born in a day. It by no means follows that the slow progress of the past is the measure of the progress of the future. If in one day three thousand were converted in one city when Christianity was inaugurated, what may we not reasonably look for as a growing Dispensation advances? This was the sample of God's workmanship, and of what He is ever waiting to do when the Church rises to her privileges and duty.

From the foregoing may we not conclude, in the third place, that the conversion of the world to Christ is absolutely certain? A thing may be possible and probable without being certain. But as to the question of certainty we are disposed to reply in the affirmative. When we speak of the evangelisation of the world, we do not mean in the sense in which Christendom is evangelised to-day; for we believe when God's purpose in Christ is accomplished with reference to a fallen but redeemed world, righteousness will be very much more in the ascendant than it now is in the nations of Europe and America, if every human being is not then personally converted to God. And why should we suppose the glorious prophecies of Scripture merely refer to the universal prevalence of nominal Christianity? To us it seems that there is just as good reason—nay, infinitely better reason—to suppose the opposite. All the arguments that Universalists apply to the termination of evil by the termination of hell we think apply with far greater force to the ultimate termination of evil on earth. Christ has redeemed all; and why should He not, as a signal honour and logical outcome of His mediatorial achievements, be permitted finally to reign over the entire family of man? And the fact is this, Christianity is tending toward universality. We do not forget what is commonly stated about the increase of population. We know

that there are more unconverted people in the world to-day, according to general belief, than there ever were before; but on the other side, it is equally true that there are more converted people than ever there were in the world previously. As to the heathen, they have some light from an unwritten revelation by tradition, from the Holy Spirit, and from the passing voice of the missionary who could not remain perfectly to instruct them in Christianity; and we believe multitudes will be saved whom some consign to perdition. We cannot fairly tabulate results, we cannot put the progress of principles into statistics. Very likely multitudes in England will get to heaven whom we sometimes piously put down to the share of the devil. How often we find when we come quietly to speak to people in private that they enjoy personal salvation, though we concluded they had only the form of godliness! Take all together, the awakening of the nations, the activity of missionary societies, the quickening of the Churches in Christendom, the political and ecclesiastical changes favouring the spread of Christianity, the conquering of public opinion by the Gospel, and we feel, when we look at all this, bound to believe in the substantial progress of Christ's cause. Beside, men must take into account the spirit and genius of Christianity. The Jewish religion was narrow, contracted, and exclusive in its spirit and aim. It was the religion of a single nation, but Christianity is a religion for the world. A very ingenious argument is constructed by the late Mr. Frankland in his thoughtful book on *The Age and the Gospel*, in which he attempts to show that Christianity may fail of its object just as Judaism did: that a 'modern provocation' may lead to the same sad results as the ancient 'provocation' did. To us it appears that the essential weakness of this argument lies in the fact that the Jewish Dispensation was not final, but the Christian Dispensation is, so far as we have any evi-

dence in the written revelation. And we think multitudes of glorious promises of universal success made under the Jewish Dispensation were meant for Gospel times. God says, 'I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh'; and this prediction of Joel was partly accomplished at Pentecost, but to be accomplished in its fulness in 'the last times,' when the special outpouring of the Spirit will be universally experienced, doing His most marvellous work, and aided, no doubt, by special providential circumstances, a probability of which we see in the spirit of commerce and in the spirit of scientific research to-day. The seventy-second psalm and the fortieth chapter of Isaiah's prophecy describe a state of things never yet experienced, nor even distantly approached, but most certainly to be realised, 'for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' We grant that much of the Old Testament prophecy is sublime poetry, and must be interpreted on poetic principles. But it is inspired poetry, and contains substantial blessings for the nations. God is not intending to cheat the world with fine imagery, raising hope to disappoint it. 'All the ends of the earth' are to look to Him for salvation, for He is God: God to save a world. When we speak of God, we mean all that He is. Right down at the bottom, below all else, there lie three great facts,—God, His will, and His work; and these facts are the proper reply to all objections to the world's conversion. This is beautifully brought out in the epistle to the Hebrews. First, the writer says: 'For unto the angels hath He not put into subjection the world to come whereof we speak'; that is, the Christian world, the world of regenerated humanity. And then he goes on to speak of the reign of Christ, and the subjection of all to Him. Here he finds a difficulty, as if he had said: Christianity has been in the world so long, and though it proposes to bring all into subjection to His authority, intellect and conscience, heart and life, yet it has not done

so. 'We see not yet all things put under Him.' What, will Christianity after all issue in gigantic failure, or will it be in the end a glorious success? As yet, we don't see it, said the writer. Well then he asks, What do we see? anything to encourage and gladden us? 'We see Jesus,'—we see Him incarnate, coming from yonder heaven to this earth; there must be something grand at the bottom, if we can only get at it, for the Saviour would not have come if there had not been some momentous business to transact. 'We see' Him dying, not defeated in death, but triumphant, saying, 'It is finished'; the atonement was effected for a lost world. 'We see' Him 'crowned with glory and honour'; not baffled and disgraced, but successful as far as He has gone. We see *that*. Not the work finished, but the foundation safely and fairly laid; but because the top stone was not brought on the same day, people ask, Will it ever be brought on? It is enough to say, 'We see Jesus,'—see Him at work to-day, changing hearts, sanctifying means, controlling empires, quickening Churches, and carrying on His cause with the avowed purpose to bend the whole world to His sway. Does faith ask higher and stronger evidence than this to guarantee the certainty of universal success before Christ gives up the reins of government? It may be ages before He completes His work, but that He will complete it we may now regard as a settled question. All great and grand movements are slow of accomplishment. A mushroom is the growth of a night, an oak is the growth of a hundred years. It seems long to us, who are of yesterday, that Christianity should not by this time have subdued the nations to the authority of Christ; but not to God, who is from everlasting to everlasting. The little leaven will leaven the whole lump. The grain of mustard seed will grow into a great tree, and the nations find shelter under its branches. The stone cut out of the mountain will smite

every evil image till every evil image is destroyed, and the stone fill the whole earth. Jew and Gentile will love as brethren, and there will be one fold and one Shepherd and one song of praise filling the ears of God, who has given to man a religion essentially diffusive as light and heat and the all-pervasive atmosphere, and must by its nature become universal.

When Paul, defending himself before Agrippa, spoke of Christianity as designed to show light to the people and to the Gentiles, 'Festus cried with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.' (Acts xxvi. 23, 24.) With a noble and dignified bearing, Paul said in reply, 'I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.' To hear Paul speak of the Christian religion as so universally essential, representing the despised Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth as certainly calculated to enlighten both Jews and Gentiles, was to the mind of Festus more than any sane man would talk about. That the religion of a poor, despised Jew, a working carpenter, not educated in any of the schools of the time, without powerful patrons, and only followed at first by a handful of Galileans, should enlighten and elevate, not merely his own countrymen, but learned and polished Greeks and Romans, appeared to Festus the very climax of insanity. All this, he thought, bears on the very face of it such violent improbability, such downright absurdity, that a man must be mad who utters such sentiments. Whatever Festus thought, Christianity has done things since his day that kings and statesmen little anticipated. However, there are still men to be found who think we are mad when we speak about the conversion of the whole world to Christ. But the salvation of the entire race of man is what the Bible places before us, and encourages us to expect. And though people laugh at the idea of the world's evangelisation, and

ridicule those who are attempting it, yet as God is true, it shall be done. Our scheme is simply that of the Christian Scriptures, and so we may trust God against the conjectures and plausibilities of men. Who at the commencement of Christianity would have dared to say that in two thousand years Europe and America would be professedly Christian, looking at the matter from a human standpoint? We believe the world will see greater things than these. The very Bible is pregnant with universalism. Does it speak of the disease of sin? It is universal. Does it tell us of a remedy in Christ? It is universal. Does it make known the duty of the Church to circulate the glad tidings of salvation? It is universal. Does it communicate the intelligence of final success? It is universal. So we are urged to give our hearts and energies to the spread and propagation of Christianity as a religion for the world; not for a tribe, not for a single nation, but for the race, and so for every man composing the race, for his personal purity and blessedness.

Chapter IV.

CHURCH QUALIFICATIONS FOR CHURCH WORK.

WHAT we have thus far advanced may be regarded as the statement of the subject, and now we come more especially to its illustration and application. We have seen what Christianity is designed to accomplish; what it has had to grapple with in its onward march among the nations; and also that it will be finally successful, whatever amount of opposition may confront it. The next inquiry which is naturally suggested is this: by whom and how is this great work of saving the world to be accomplished? To this question the Gospel of Jesus gives but one answer: the Church of the living God.

‘Prepare ye the way of the Lord,’ was the strong and pointed language of Isaiah to the Jewish Church; ‘prepare ye the way of the Lord,’ was the language of John the Baptist in later times; ‘prepare ye the way of the Lord,’ is still the language of God’s ministers to God’s people, and as loudly and emphatically uttered to-day as ever it was in the past history of the Church. The Christians of the age are to do all in their power to ‘prepare the way’ for the complete and universal triumph of Christianity; they are to ‘make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’

The world is yet to a large extent a moral desert, uncultivated, barren, and painfully dreary in its aspect. It has been so from age to age. In the ordinary course of nature, and apart from grace, there are no ‘trees of righteousness’ springing up, growing and flourishing; no ‘fruits

unto holiness, adorning men's characters and blessing their lives : only one sad and utter absence of ' the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.' Without vital Christianity the world is one wide waste, one extended desert, unfruitful, parched, and unpleasing ; nature droops her weary head, and there are no green fields or fruitful valleys to relieve the eye. In all this we see the spiritual fulfilment of the words, ' Cursed is the ground for thy sake.' It is man's fall and man's continued sinfulness which has occasioned this sad state of things. Had he not taken the forbidden fruit, the world would have been clothed in moral beauty and produced abundant fruit, would have been in the highest sense as ' the garden of the Lord.' And had not men everywhere continued persistently to indulge in evil thoughts, motives, and deeds, paradise would long ago have been restored to fallen humanity. But as we have intimated, the long lost inheritance of the race will be completely regained. ' He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root ; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the world with fruit.' ' And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.' ' Where sin abounded' in the fall, ' grace hath much more abounded' in redemption ; and so moral beauty and blessing will rise higher in the history of our race than in any other.

Before these scenes of moral beauty and fruitfulness can be universally witnessed, it is clear that the Christian Church has a great amount of hard cultivation to do. Ere Christ can come without let or hindrance to reign over an actually regenerated race, many deep valleys will have to be filled, many lofty mountains will have to be taken down. And this we regard as the special and peculiar work of the Church, for which she requires special and peculiar qualifications.

In this great and important business the Church must

begin with herself. In the Church there are numerous and formidable obstacles to the supreme and universal dominion of Christ. However singular and startling it may seem to some, such is the fact, and we had better recognise and fairly face it at once. It is needful, in the first instance, *that the Church should get and keep a vigorous spiritual life.* What sort of Christian life are men mostly living to-day? Praying a little occasionally; for the most part only uttering a few broken sentences when they go to bed at night and again when they get up in the morning, and these few broken sentences got over as quickly as possible and never once thought of afterward. Going to church or chapel once on the Sabbath, the rich mostly in the morning and not at night, and the poor mostly at night and not in the morning; and this sort of thing prevalent all over the country and in all denominations. Seldom or never speaking to neighbours or friends about personal salvation, or asking them to the house of God; but just quietly going to and from the sanctuary with sealed lips. Not reproving sin, and not bearing testimony for Christ with clear and convincing speech. And perhaps as seldom speaking to their own families about personal conversion as they do to their neighbours. Both the working-class portion and the wealthier members of the Church indulging in worldly conformity and worldly-mindedness. Not the sacred sanctifying the secular, but the secular secularising the sacred. This is to a very large extent the style of the Christian life of to-day both among churchmen and nonconformists, not the ideal but the actual life. The ideal life is what their theology describes it to be, but the actual is too commonly the above, which falls infinitely below the ideal of the New Testament. Just as in nature the ideal river is a pure, beautiful stream, but the actual one often as polluted as can well be imagined by the residents of some large manufacturing town. And just as the ideal landscape is covered

pretty well with splendid trees, but on the actual one the trees are stunted and dying under the influence of the smoke from some great centre of industry, or from the poison of some chemical works in the neighbourhood; so the ideal of a Christian is a strong, full grown man, with power to do the work of a man in Christ, but the actual Christian is too commonly a big spiritual baby, requiring a marvellous amount of care, or a poor spiritual invalid, to be watched over and tenderly nursed from year to year. The churches are turned too much into nurseries and hospitals: nurseries, not for proper spiritual children; hospitals, not for soldiers wounded in the fight, but for people who ought to have grown out of their Christian babyhood years ago, and for soldiers who have never gone forth with the armies of the Church at all. And when you look at much of the Christian life in these times you are ready to say, Is this the type of thing to save the world? Is this life after the ideal and plan of Jesus? Has He not come that we might have life, not sickly, feeble, consumptive, stunted and dwarfed by worldly influence and example,—not life at all after that fashion, but ‘that we might have it more abundantly’? A life greater and grander than the Church has ever yet realised, but which Christ has placed within her reach. A manly, intelligent, energetic life; wise, strong, and far-reaching in its influence; life after the spirit and example of Jesus, seeing with Christ’s eyes, feeling with Christ’s heart, acting with Christ’s spiritual power. Nothing short of this will do in these times effectually to push the interests of the Redeemer’s kingdom and fully to accomplish Church work.

First of all, then, the Church must seek quickened spiritual perceptions and deepened spiritual feeling, must see and feel the absolute and immediate need of doing something for God. The members of the Church must have true zeal for God, and zeal according to knowledge. Not a

mere passing desire, not an occasional burst of enthusiasm, not a mere lively impression lasting during the Sabbath and dying during the week; it must be an ever living and deepening impression, a thing engraven on the heart by the finger of God, perpetually present to the mind, and tender to the touch of the Divine Spirit.

Too many are Christians on the Sunday, and we had almost said on the Sunday only. When the sacred day of rest has gone by and they once more mix with the men of the world, the blessed influences of Sabbath exercises and devotions seem to have passed with God's holy day. Their solemn vows are forgotten, their holiest determinations unheeded, their most sincere covenant engagements trampled upon and broken with a most marvellous ease and astonishing quickness. And thus they live till Sabbath comes round again, bringing most painfully to their recollection the fervent resolutions they breathed to heaven when bowing with God's people in God's sanctuary the Sabbath before. Many feel excited to noble daring and doing for God and men when sitting under some eloquent practical discourse which keenly bites the mind. They bitterly chide themselves for having allowed so many of their best days to pass without having accomplished more for the Church and the world. And there and then they most solemnly purpose, should God spare them, that for all time to come they will work hard for Christ, and earnestly endeavour to make some amends for past unfaithfulness and negligence. But when the service is over, when the excitement of the sermon is past, and they have fairly launched again upon the full tide of secular life, their stimulated zeal is rapidly chilled by the influences and temptations of an ungodly world. Now to a very great extent Christian life, with many good sort of people, in the present day, is passed in thus purposing to do better and then painfully regretting their repeated failure to carry out their resolutions. It is hardly necessary to say

that the world will never be converted to Christ by such a fitful and irresolute Christianity. There must be a calmly fervent zeal, a steady, unbending purpose, a heart unchanged and unchanging in the enterprise of the Cross. Nothing but a vigorous, steady, persevering, and undaunted Christianity will do for these times, a Christianity with courage sufficient to kill all selfishness and sin within us, and which never knows when it is defeated by opposition without.

Sad that Christian men should allow the world to claim and consume so much time and energy in fortune-building and pleasure-seeking, especially when they see all here will soon be gone and admit that they are destined to live for ever. We are perfectly aware that men may preserve and beautifully exhibit their piety amid the busiest scenes of secular life, that, in fact, their very secular life may become so much religious service when all is done from Christian ideas and motives. But how frequently it is painfully otherwise! And remembering that only a seventh of a very brief and uncertain existence is spent in Sabbaths, with special exemption from the pressure of worldly business and with special opportunity of getting and doing Christian good, should not Christian men be careful how the precious time of the week passes, especially recollecting that their Sabbaths are far from being so spiritual as God requires? Everything considered, but a small portion of time is specially allowed us on earth to prepare for an endless existence beyond the grave, and to assist in fitting others for the unspeakable glory of the skies by uninterrupted Christian work. And when we therefore look at the great amount of time claimed by the needs of nature, then think of the great amount exclusively devoted to secular affairs, and see how little is left for Christian aggression, not losing sight of the fact of the great portion of life which passes in unfulfilled purposes: do we not see it to be extremely necessary that the Church should first of all begin

with herself in dealing with Church work? What is to become of the world, which comparatively lieth in the arms of the wicked one, in the nineteenth century if the Church of Jesus does not awake from her spiritual slumber and shake herself from the dust in which she has so long idly and indifferently lain, forgetful of duty? Can we reasonably expect that opposition to Christian aggression will cease while the Church by her unfaithfulness and indifference places barriers in the way of the chariot of Christianity, and so impedes the onward movements of God in the Gospel? The means to be employed to do God's work in the world must evidently have reference in the first instance to the Church herself. The Church must seek an improved spiritual state. The Church must carefully remove everything connected with herself that would hinder the progress of the Gospel; and then the Church, fitted to receive Christ without existing drawbacks, will be effectually fitted to do with ease the work of preparation for His glorious coming with reference to others. When we come impartially to look into the thing does it not seem ten thousand pities that so many really good Christian people should live a noble natural life, a noble intellectual life, a noble social life, and yet the nobleness of the noblest life remain without its full development. What personal blessedness is missed, what usefulness is sacrificed, what food for future sorrow is being laid up! When death comes, or privileges are lost, or affliction brings a pause in life, Christian people see and feel their folly. Is it not the wiser way to brace ourselves while in health and strength to be and to do something that will afford us satisfactory reflection on earth and then in heaven for ever?

The Church having a holy work to do must seek and manifest lofty spiritual purity. There must be deep and entire devotion to Christ, the unreserved consecration of our all to Him. We must willingly and gladly comply

with the calling of the apostle: 'I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.' (Romans xii. 1, 2.) By all the mercies of God in providence and redemption we are placed under obligation to give our entire selves to God, and not to keep back anything from Him. The personal sacrifice we present must be perfectly pure, and we must never allow our bodies to be put to unholy uses. We must live dead to evil in every sphere of life and labour, and be such a sacrifice as a holy God can accept, without blemish or defect of any sort, as symbolised by the animal sacrifices under the Old Dispensation. To live such a life in a bad world is the most rational thing we can do. Not conformed in judgment, spirit, or conduct to this world, but living a supernatural life amid natural things; and so working out God's will and completing personal Christian character.

Christian purity must be very practical. Not an ideal but a living thing. Mere theory is useless unless diligently wrought into the warp and woof of everyday life. There must be no divorce between piety and zeal. Zeal will soon consume itself and die out if separated from goodness, as fire will soon burn away unless well supplied with fuel. On the part of the servants of God there must be continually exhibited all the characteristics of grace, the daily culture and practice of all the virtues. An imperfect and one-sided Christianity will not do for these times. Our religion must be broad, healthy, strong, just, truthful, honest, charitable, and energetic. There must be deadness to the world, thirsting after righteousness, a spirit of prayer, firm trust in God, a heart continually thrilled and

electrified by lofty aspirations, a pure conscience, a mind engaged in high devotion to the purposes of the Cross. The servant must be as his Lord, crucified with Christ, so as to be dead to moral wrong in every shape and form, and doing all to the glory of the Father; while diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; following Christ continually and in everything, whether it be in the employment of the appointed means to obtain strength for earnest toil, or in the difficult discharge of duty. Wherever we be and whatever we are doing we must keep a single eye, and glorify God in our bodies and spirits, which are His. This must be the immutable law that governs us.

Beside, we must always be in the spirit of our proper Christian work. Faithful attendance to one class of arduous duties will not answer for another, will not compensate for the loss of spirituality of mind, and will not be accepted in the place of ardent religious affection. God has, and must have, somewhat against all who leave their first love and neglect to go on to the manhood and perfection of their Christianity, whatever they may do in other respects for the welfare of the Church. Christian men must seek the highest type of Christianity, and 'perfect holiness in the fear of God.' Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, 'that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word: that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.' (Ephesians v. 25—27.) The cleansing efficacy of the truth, in its utterance of promise, invitation, and instruction is one grand instrument provided for the complete sanctification of the Church of Jesus. It is distinctly said too that He gave 'Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' (Titus ii. 14.) Christ gave Himself, His entire self, the greatest and

grandest gift ever given, for the accomplishment of our complete sanctity; that by virtue of such a gift He might claim us and use us in zealous and self-denying effort for the establishment of His kingdom in the world. The Church of Christ is designed to bear perpetual witness to the purity of her Lord and Head, amid the depravity of the times and the deep-rooted love of evil in humanity. If she fail to do this, she signally fails in one grand part of her great commission, which really involves failure altogether in the end. Unless the Church catch the spirit and get the character of Christ, she can never succeed in impressing His glorious image on human society. She must first be like Christ that she may make the world like Him. We can none of us, as the professors of Christianity, give out for the good of men more than we first take in of the mind and character of Jesus. 'He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.' (1 John ii. 6.) The disciple must reflect the character of the Master, be a living and irreproachable witness of the purity of Jesus. Immoral people have no right in the Christian Church. Properly understood, the Church is a company of believers, seeking to become in spirit and character like Christ, and to carry out His purpose with reference to the salvation of men. Holiness must then be written on the heart and characterise the life of all who profess Christian discipleship. Each and all connected with the Church must never rest till they fully possess the pure, elevated, loving mind of the Saviour. Part of the members being right will not atone or in any way make up for the portion who are wrong. One class of Christian graces will not be accepted as a substitute for every other class. There must be a full-proportioned, a life-size Christianity. Some good and noble deeds will not excuse certain bad and ignoble doings. The Church must possess and exhibit a perfect Christianity, that her whole history may exhibit and illustrate 'pure

religion and undefiled,' and that she may become instrumental in the spread of scriptural holiness through every land. Without personal holiness we cannot purify and elevate human society. Sin stops up the channel of Divine communication, and God's grace cannot flow through us to others. The vessel must be clean, meet for the Master's use, or God cannot employ us as He otherwise would for the propagation of Christianity. Purity is power for all aggressive purposes; and impurity is weakness in every department of Church work. Let us be thankful that Christ has come 'to destroy the works of the devil,' first within us as His Church and people, and then all around us by our holy agency. It is only a pure, spiritual Church that will ever be able to subjugate men everywhere to the reign of Jesus. We must be holy, for God is holy, and instrumentally we have in God's arrangement to make our earth another paradise.

The Church must be filled with love to God and man.

The natural tendency of the heart is to hate, and the mission of Christianity is to change that hatred into love. Not the love of self or pleasure or fame or wealth, but of Him who is the highest, wisest, strongest, and holiest; who made us, sustains us, and redeemed us by the blood of His Son, and has given His Word and Spirit to aid and guide us in our love to Him. We are not to hate and oppose Him, not to thwart His loving purposes in redemption, but so to love Him as to carry out His gracious designs in the blessed Gospel. Not to love with an ideal love, a sentimental love, a love of mere admiration, or of occasional and fitful feeling; but really and truly, with sincere, profound, and genuine affection. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' Thou shalt love Him heartily, 'with true heartedness and sincerity,' keeping back no part of thy heart from Him, but giving to Him thy supreme and complete affection. If Christianity does not take hold of

the heart, and rightly regulate its affection, the life is sure to be out of joint. The great difficulty in daily life is to keep the heart right. If in ordinary life we do not love a work it is irksome, we have a divided feeling, and so make nothing out. It is precisely so in Christianity. We must put our heart's love into it if we are to be worth anything for Church work. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind.' Not only heartily but intelligently, putting thought and intelligence in thy religion. Not loving and serving God with a blind and ignorant devotion, just like a mere devotee, but like a rational and enlightened creature. And while a thoughtful and intelligent piety is the need of all time, it is the special need of this age. The full powers of mind and intellect must be pressed into the service of God. Some people want religion made easy for the head both in and out of the pulpit, both in sermons and in books. God, however, requires the love of the whole mind, that its best powers and efforts shall be devoted to Him. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul': as we say in common life, Thou shalt put some soul into it. It is not to be a cold and indifferent affection, but full of the warmest and strongest feeling, pressing all your soul into your service for Him. Public singers and speakers get on poorly unless they put strong feeling into their work. So it is with painters and poets or workers in ordinary life. You must put feeling into the thing you have in hand in order to get on. And how much more so with reference to the highest, noblest, and best work you ever touched or can touch. And if men be earnest and enthusiastic in earthly things, should they not be especially so with heavenly things? 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength.' With all the force and energy of thy nature, with an intensified affection, with a strong and powerful love, with all the strength of a manly and sanctified character. Some love God with a feeble love,

and it comes to little for anybody. It is only poor service they render to their Saviour and their fellows. Now God claims from us a supreme, practical, and energetic love: a love that will lead to every good word and work for Him and for others.

Now, this is certainly a great deal, but this is not all which the law of God requires of us. It is not enough that we love God with a sincere, fervent, intelligent, and energetic love. When we love Him with perfect sincerity, with the utmost fervour, with the fullest exercise of enlightened reason, and with the whole energy of our being, we have only got as far as the first and greatest commandment. There is a second like unto it, and, growing out of it, like the trunk and branches of the tree growing from the roots, like the superstructure of the building rising from the foundation. It is thus: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' The second commandment, like the first, demands love; the same love, remember, turned into another channel, directed in a proper measure to the creatures of God. It is, so to speak, an extension of the love we bear to God to His creature man. It is partly another way of loving God. How are we to show that we love God but by loving His creatures? Jesus taught us that to love the Son is to love the Father. Parents can understand this. They feel the love given to their little ones is so much love really given to them. The philanthropist feels the love enlisted in the enterprise he has at heart is so much love shown to him. And the great Father of us all takes what we do for His creatures as done to Him. The principle is indicated in the teaching of Jesus. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.' If we 'love our neighbours as ourselves,' this is so much love really and truly given to God, by carrying out His will and arrangement. There is something broad and grand in the

love of the Gospel; it not only links us to God, but to the whole race. And when we come narrowly to look into it, when we thoroughly examine its nature, we see that love to God and man is the love of truth, purity, justice, benevolence, and all things heavenly, and to fulfil all righteousness. It is a blessed, Divine, practical thing. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' So sincerely and truly. Not as thou lovest God, for He must always have the first and highest place in thy affections. But the love of God does not exclude, it rather comprehends, love to thy fellows. Love to thy neighbour springs from and grows out of love to God. The command is to love thy neighbour as thyself,—not more, but not less. So to love him as to interest thyself on his behalf: to think for him, to speak for him, to act for him, helping him in every possible way; laying plans of usefulness, and then carefully working them out for thy neighbour's good,—loving after the example of God, who 'so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth might not perish, but have everlasting life.' It was a love that did something real and substantial for the good of the race. And if in this particular way we be followers or imitators of God as dear children, our lives will be noble and blessed. Only let us do this, and our Christianity will become a power that will make itself deeply felt; it will become influential and all-pervasive, and nothing can withstand its energy. Let us do this, and the millennium will not be far distant, the Gospel of love will soon become universally triumphant. Too commonly we have hated and not loved our neighbour, and especially if he differed from us in religious opinions or modes of worship. We have spent our time and means and energy in fighting one another, instead of doing battle only with evil; we have mistaken the enemy, and waged war upon the army of the Church, crippled her means and strength, and the Church

has often failed in consequence. Loving our neighbour means loving harlots and publicans and thieves, loving those who are in themselves impure and unlovable, loving those who do not love us. We have said, Are we to care for the outcasts of society, for the men and women who have lost all sense of decency? Are we to go to them in their filth and disease and degradation? And we have turned away from all this to labour for God in respectable streets, and kept in respectable circles of society, while many of our neighbours, dying in evil and misery, have been unvisited by us, or only visited at long intervals and for a brief space.

Now, if ever Christianity become universal, every professing Christian must be filled with love to God and man in the way we have indicated. All the members of the Christian Church must be deeply impressed with the mind of the Master, and thoroughly imbued with the spirit of universal charity; not only possess supreme love to God, but pure, strong, unquenchable love to their fellows. There must be in the service of Jesus what the author of *Ecce Homo* calls, 'the enthusiasm of humanity.' The sentiment must be burnt into our very soul, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour,' whom thou hast so long neglected and disowned. And if it be asked, in the old, narrow, selfish spirit, 'And who is my neighbour?' the only Christian answer is, He who is in the same world and has need of thy sympathy and effort. Under Christ the whole world has become one neighbourhood, and every man in it our neighbour. And so long as men are perishing for lack of knowledge,—men who are our undoubted neighbours and brothers,—perishing at our own doors, and away in the ends of the earth, our charity must be intensely active, must be permeated with supernatural energy, and at the same time be wise and thoughtful, as well as noble and large-hearted. Not a charity that dies of prudence on the

one hand, or evaporates in mere feeling that does no good to anybody on the other; but a heavenly charity, which is at once fervent and practical, world-wide in its embrace and activities, while it keeps a keen eye and ready hand for the necessities at our own door.

The Church must also seek and exhibit *a spirit of intense earnestness* in the work of God. Earnestness deep, real, strong, and undying is essential to success. What we do for God and for others with reference to spiritual religion we must do with our might. We must attend to our own spiritual affairs with earnestness and energy for the sake of other people, as well as for our own sake. Alas for others if we do not first put earnestness into our personal Christianity! 'Can the blind lead the blind?' Personal fitness is the first law claiming consideration in Church qualifications for Church work. Your own hearts must first be thoroughly right with God and baptized with heavenly fire. Then and not before will you feel proper compassion for the Christless and perishing multitudes around you. Your personal Christian experience tells you that when you most deeply feel your own obligations to Christ, when you are most alive to your own spiritual welfare, when you are most thoroughly devoted to God yourselves, you are best fitted to do and to die for others.

But though you first begin with yourselves, you must not stop here; you must go beyond yourselves and live largely for the spiritual good of others. As Christians you are forbidden by the very nature and law of your religion to eat your morsel alone. There are some who only try to take care of their own religion and never put forth a single effort to save the souls of their fellows; but they thus live in violation of the spirit and principle of the Gospel. Christianity is not a narrow, selfish religion. It commands and gives us the heart to love and to labour for the benefit of others. As therefore with the psalmist we pray, 'Create

in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me,' with the psalmist we must resolve, 'Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.' (Psalm li. 10, 13.) You must have a tender pity for men, a burning charity for unsaved souls, as this only will lead you to live for the spiritual good of the people, and to labour with zeal and energy, with your whole soul and mind, to bring them to God. You may not be able to give great scholarship to God, you may not be able to give great genius to God, you may not be able to give princely wealth to God, but you may give earnest work to God, and this is precisely what He asks at your hands. And while earnestly working ourselves we must endeavour to infuse a spirit of earnestness into others. Many members are lost to the Church because we do not sufficiently enlist their sympathies and energies and fail to find them full employment in the vineyard of Christ. If we were careful to find them something to do and kept them earnestly at work, our own working power would be multiplied by working through them, and multitudes would be kept from swelling the enormous list of backsliders in heart and life.

Looking at the work of God on earth in the light of eternity, and in the light cast on it by the death of Christ, we see that half-heartedness is altogether inexcusable in the cause of the Redeemer. Indifference cannot be tolerated in such momentous enterprise. Your whole powers with all their force, your whole heart with all the energy of love must be employed for God. He is infinitely worthy of your all; He solemnly claims your all, and He will not and cannot be satisfied with less than your all. If you 'keep back part of the price' of the possession which is all His own, purchased by the blood of His Son, cultivated by His own hand and the hand of His ministers, and refreshed by His Spirit and grace,—we say, if you do not render to God

His right and due, then He will be avenged, and that speedily.

We hear in our age frequent and bitter complaining about the great ado that is made as to imperative Christian duties and the absolute need of Christian earnestness. Men impatiently ask, Are we to do nothing but mind religion? Is Christianity perpetually to fill and occupy our whole soul? Is it to touch and influence all our thoughts, motives, and desires, and to be seen in all the actions and arrangements of life? Yes; there must be religion in everything, and it must be Christianity in earnest. As Christians, we must possess unfeigned sincerity and holy fervour. Not a body without a soul; not a sun without light and heat; not the 'form of godliness' without the power, without the spirit, without the all-pervading vitality, the stirring life and holy activity; not a feeble, powerless, emaciated Christianity with all that is heavenly and Christlike gone out of it: but one that is mighty to accomplish God's wise and benevolent purposes in the earth. It is this earnest and perpetual work for God that is so excessively irksome to those who are not baptized into the mind of Christ. If we contend for unrelaxing effort in the cause of God we are said to be righteous over much, or rank enthusiasts, or probably religiously mad. Such, alas! is fallen human nature, and such the heart's deep-rooted enmity to God and to what is virtuous in others. People may be earnest admirers of painting, poetry, music, and polite literature; and the world says they are persons of cultivated taste. People may engross the whole of their time and energy in the affairs of the nation, the economical interests of our towns and cities, the educational institutions and movements of the age, and in various schemes of social improvement; and the world says that they are philanthropists. People may be entirely given up to commerce, have all their soul in business all the year round; and the world says that

they are men of push, tact, and splendid business habits. Men may enter the navy or army, and with all the ardour of their nature, devote themselves to their profession; and the world says that they are gallant men, lovers of their country, heroes, and patriots. But when a man becomes a Christian, and entering the Church gives himself up to Christian work, and burns with ardour for the salvation of souls, then the world says he is 'crazy': 'much religion has made him mad.' The fact is simply this, men may be anything and everything under heaven but Christians. The greatest possible enthusiasts in painting, sculpture, literature, scholarship, soldiership, statesmanship, in anything and everything but Christianity. If you come to the religion of Christ, there is no excuse and no pardon for zeal and a healthy enthusiasm. For anything and everything else there is a ready and ample apology, or even a most handsome compliment; the thing is looked upon as commendable rather than blamable, more to be praised and imitated than condemned. But surely we as Christian people are not to be driven from the position we have taken up by unfair and unreasonable men. If worthy of the Christian cause, we shall not be timidly turned out of the post of duty we occupy in the name of our Master. We have a work to do for God and men, and, the Lord helping us, we must and will do it. And while others manifest a pardonable or praiseworthy enthusiasm in their different callings and professions in life, we as Christians must do so all the more in our momentous vocation, our sacred and Christlike toil. Is the religion of Jesus to be the very last thing in the world to call forth all the soul's earnestness? Is that which is of the first and highest importance to be looked upon and treated as if it belonged to the region of the infinitely little? Are we to act toward Christianity as if we were only justified in very rarely bringing it out prominently before the world? Rather, we must seek a

sanctified enthusiasm, joyfully doing the will of God from the heart, and thankful to become 'all things to all men, that we may by all means save some.' As we love God and love the souls for whom the Saviour bled, that love we bear to God, combined with the love to us exhibited upon the cross, must constrain and bear us onward in our separate spheres of self-denying toil with zeal and energy. We may talk of the noble doings of philanthropy and patriotism, we may fondly dwell on the achievements of benevolent institutions in Christendom; but who give their hearts and energies for the direct spiritual good of the people but those who have themselves been converted to God and baptized by the Holy Ghost? We are free to confess that it is to such persons we are looking,—to their prayers and their lives, their self-denying zeal and efforts,—for the conversion of the world to Christ, while we by no means undervalue indirect and subsidiary efforts on the part of others. Some may tell us that the Church has their best wishes, and go no further. Others may contribute liberally to the cause of Christ, and then with strange indifference look on. While multitudes of mere nominal Christians do nothing whatever to aid the conversion of the world. So that we are led to look to truly God-fearing men and women for the spiritual elevation of the race. Those who have first given themselves to God and then to the Church, by the will of God, must accomplish this mighty moral transformation. The saints of the Most High must take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom. You must conquer the world for Christ, and if you do not it will never be done. But if ever you do this great and important work for Christ, you must feel a holy fire burning in your souls, and the zeal of God's house must eat you up. Like the Saviour you must ever say, in language singularly perplexing to unspiritual men, but luminous and clear to men with Christian experience, 'I have meat to eat that ye

know not of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.' (John iv. 32, 34.) The sentiment of St. James must haunt you by night and day, linger in your memory, and ring in your ears everywhere, till your entire powers are summoned to duty, and your whole energies taxed to the utmost: 'To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' (James iv. 17.) If you have a talent to use, and do not use it; if you have a blessing to bestow, and do not bestow it; if you have an opportunity of usefulness, and do not embrace it; if you can in any way bring glory to God and benefit to man, and refuse to do it;—remember, to you it is sin, whatever else it may be in the loss of personal joy and blessing.

The Church having attained an efficient spiritual state *must henceforth endeavour to conserve and utilise this fitness* to do God's work in God's way, by constant attention to the ordinances of Christianity, and the employment of all the means and methods of spiritual development. It is as important to take care of the gold you gain as to work for other gold; and as important to preserve the qualification for Church work, as it is to seek that qualification. But unless you constantly improve by private prayer, searching the Scriptures, hearing the Word of God read and expounded, and availing yourselves of all Christian privileges within your reach, you will suffer serious spiritual declension, and become incapable of toiling successfully for God, or grow weary in the work of the Lord. And this is quite natural. By neglecting to take your regular meals you become weak and faint; and were you to remain away from the table and persistently refuse your accustomed food, the inevitable result would be sickness and death. And as in natural so it is in moral and spiritual things, you must constantly use the proper means to preserve life and health. You must feed on Christ in your

hearts by faith, with thanksgiving. He is the bread of life which came down from heaven. You must eat of that bread, or you have no life in you. You must constantly eat of it, or your spiritual health will assuredly decline, and death of soul will ultimately follow. Now if you constantly eat of the heavenly bread, you must constantly use the means to obtain it. It is only in and by the use of the means God has ordained that you can receive the necessary spiritual food. You are 'blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus'; but, remember, it is 'in heavenly places,' and by the adoption of heavenly means and ordinances, and not by mere means and methods of your own.

Regular exercise is also necessary to preserve good health and prolong natural life; and activity in the Church is necessary to preserve the healthy action and working power of the Church. Why is it, we sometimes ask ourselves as we contemplate the sad moral condition of the world in the nineteenth century of Christianity, that the Gospel has not made greater progress than it has? Why has not the world long ago presented a marvellously different aspect? We fear the answer greatly lies in the fact that the Church has not been, to the extent she ought, a working Church; not worked enough to keep up and develop her own piety, and, consequently, not worked enough to spread Christian piety among the masses of the people. There is no greater curse to the Church than spiritual idleness, no surer blight than inactivity. Moral sloth is certain self-destruction, both subjectively and objectively, both with reference to the piety and prosperity of the Church. And in that case nothing in the universe can save the Church, nothing in heaven above or in the earth beneath, for God Himself cannot do it consistently with His character if the Church refuse to employ the means of self-preservation. The machinery will not work if

allowed to remain disengaged in the operation of the mill ; it rusts, and becomes unfit for manufacturing purposes. It is precisely so with the machinery of the Church. There is no greater blessing to the Church than work, unceasing, untiring, abundant work, for the glory of God and the good of men. A working Church is a prospering Church, but a Church at ease and inactive is a declining Church, and very soon likely to die out altogether. And Christian people have only to choose between two alternatives—work and success or idleness and defeat, have only to choose between working out and rusting out. And better for themselves, better for the Church, better for the world, better for this life and for the life to come, that Christian people should die of excessive work than of excessive idleness. Let us urge you with all the power and earnestness of which we are capable to ‘increase and abound in the work of the Lord,’ not only for your own sake, but also for the sake of others, and especially for His sake who bought you with His most precious blood.

Beside proper food and regular exercise, we must breathe a pure atmosphere in order to preserve good physical health. If people would only think about it, fresh air is just as necessary to good health as wholesome food. And this is the case in spiritual life as well as in natural life. We must constantly breathe a pure, heavenly atmosphere by living very near to God. When in God’s house or engaged in religious meetings we are conscious of a very different influence and feeling from what we experience in worldly company, or while doing business with worldly-minded men. People seek change of air for the benefit of their physical nature, go to the sea-side, or seek a temporary residence among the mountains, or go to the continent, or take a sea-voyage, or adopt some other expedient for bracing themselves. Well, let them adopt the same principle for the benefit of the soul, and seek change

of air spiritually by leaving worldly things and worldly men, and getting into their closet or going to some Christian meeting to breathe the blessed atmosphere of prayer and praise. As the soul is infinitely more important than the body, people should take infinitely more care of the life and health of the soul than they do of the life and health of the body.

To preserve the life and health of the body, you must carefully attend to sanitary arrangements, and you must carry out this principle in your spiritual affairs. Millions of valuable lives have been lost, and millions of money wasted by bad sanitary arrangements. Preventible disease has spread, men have fallen victims to it, and children have been left orphans and women widows, or the persons in question have lingered out a feeble existence to the end of their days, and even then probably dropped into a premature grave. But there is a worse effluvia than escapes from bad drains, a worse poison than is taken in by consuming unwholesome water, a more sickening smell than comes from ill-ventilated houses; it is the breath of hell, the poison of moral evil, the effluvia of confirmed and long-established personal wickedness in people about you. Now you must guard your spiritual life from such unwholesome and dangerous influences, or you will be blighted with disease infinitely worse than typhoid fever, and drop into perdition at last, unless you be very circumspect and walk in the greatest wisdom toward them that are without; not despising them, but loving and helping them all you can, while you guard against their spirit and example, as those of people who carry about with them the most deadly spiritual disease.

We say, then, all these means must be used and all this care must be taken to conserve and utilise the life and power of the Church, in order that the Church may become increasingly efficient in doing God's work in the

world, and be more successful than ever in the propagation of the Gospel. A feeble, sickly Church, a Church out of health, consumptive and dying, with its powers undeveloped or in a condition of premature decay, can never take the world for Christ. We need strong, healthy, vigorous Christian men, men who have reached the manhood of soul and intellect, wise as serpents and harmless as doves, innocent as babes yet lion-hearted, having the spirit of martyrdom fully burnt into them, prepared to do and die for Christianity in these times. This is the grand spirit for making aggression upon the kingdom of darkness, the spirit that will convert the moral wilderness into a beautiful and fruitful garden, the spirit that will conquer earth and hell, and enthrone Christ in the minds and affections of men, because it is the spirit of the Cross. It triumphed on Calvary, and has always and everywhere triumphed from that day to this, and will triumph till the end of all things.

Chapter V.

MEANS OF CHRISTIAN AGGRESSION.

IT is clear that the work of the Church is to convert the world to Christ. Its grand mission is the evangelisation of the whole race, instrumentally to save and elevate every fallen son of Adam. No doubt this great and important work will be accomplished by fit means as well as by proper agents : by means characterised by God's abundant grace, illustrating the justice and purity of His government, and in every way showing forth the Divine glory.

We are certain that whatever God may employ for the conversion of the world, nothing worldly or carnal will be countenanced. Paul says, 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.' (2 Corinthians x. 4.) Christ Himself said, 'My kingdom is not of this world : if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight.' (John xviii. 36.) Mohammedanism has been largely spread by the sword. Its founder exhorted his followers to fight for their religion, to use means of cruelty to gain converts. They were taught that 'one drop of blood shed in the cause of God, or one night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months employed in fasting and prayer. Whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven ; at the day of judgment his wounds shall be resplendent as vermilion, and odoriferous as musk ; and the loss of his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubims.' Death or conversion was the only alternative offered to heathens, and tribute or conversion to Jews and Christians. Nor

have force and cruelty been exclusively employed by the devotees of the false prophet. What shall we say of that corrupt form of Christianity, that half heathen religion which has so frequently used the secular power to enforce its tenets? The Inquisition of Popery has been employed to punish men of Protestant principles, and to enforce the traditions of men as of equal authority with the Word of God. Now pure Christianity does not endorse the employment of physical force for moral and spiritual purposes. Had Christ's kingdom been earthly in its origin and character, His disciples would have done battle for its establishment. But carnal weapons are repudiated here. We cannot use them without bringing down upon us the displeasure and rebuke of the Master. The sword drawn by the impetuous Peter in defence of Jesus was immediately ordered to its scabbard, teaching for all time that the world is to be conquered for Christ, and Christianity universally spread, not by the sword of secular power, but by purely spiritual means. Come what may, and whether the millennium arrives sooner or later, one thing is decided for the Church, and decided for ever: not by the roar of cannon, not by the crack of the rifle, not by the clashing of swords or the thrust of bayonets, not by martial exploits and diplomatic manœuvring, not by mighty fleets and armed thousands,—not by any of these or by all of them is this fallen world to be brought back to God.

First and foremost among the spiritual means to be employed to save the race is the preaching of the Gospel. Preaching is an institution peculiar to Christianity. It is of Divine authority and perpetual obligation. Nothing can take its place or do its work: neither the press, nor the school, nor the platform, nor anything else that may be tried in the course of ages. It is by preaching, pre-eminently, that men are to be turned from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, and from the power of Satan to

God. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,'—read and expounded. How then can people hear without a preacher, and how can men preach except they be sent? Preachers must be Divinely qualified and commissioned. Hence Christ called and fitted and sent forth His apostles, the first heralds of the Cross, to disciple all nations. Teaching Christianity, publishing the Gospel, plainly and faithfully proclaiming the whole truth as it is in Jesus, is the wonderful lever by which the moral world is to be elevated. This Christian truth explained and enforced by converted men, who have themselves experienced the transforming power of the truth, and are moved by the Holy Ghost, to preach it to others,—is the most effectual cannonading of the strongholds of ignorance and irreligion. Men and devils cannot finally withstand the bombarding of the Gospel, and the world must ultimately surrender to Christ. Even now the strongest fortifications often fall, and the very citadel where Satan's seat is capitulates. But the whole army of the wicked one must perish in this fearful conflict, this protracted struggle between truth and error, good and evil. For the Gospel is 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,' a power superior to every other force in the universe. We all know that the apostles preached Jesus and the resurrection with marvellous effect. To say the least, Christian preaching accomplished something real and lasting in the first age of the Church. The Gospel was omnipotent then. Of these early Christian preachers it was said, 'Their sound went into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world': to the very extremity of the Roman empire. Yes, but, men say, the feebleness of the modern pulpit is proverbial. Men are not shaking whole communities, as Peter and Paul did, or as Wesley and Whitefield did. But the pew has some responsibility here as well as the pulpit. Men in this luxurious age want a luxurious Christianity.

Not plain Christian truth, but intellect, genius, scholarship : a Gospel of amusement and anecdote on the one hand, or of science and philosophy on the other. A Gospel manipulated and ornamented, served up with taste in small quantities to suit people with sickly spiritual appetites. And perhaps our best modern preachers have been too commonly mere splendid talking machines, expounding the truth without sufficiently applying it, and so producing little effect upon soul and conscience. Surely a brighter and wiser future is dawning, in which there will be greater directness of aim and more frequent and powerful home thrusts. We trust, what is called revival preaching, if it means anything real, will be much more common ; that preachers will preach with the idea of doing present business in winning souls for Christ, and that multitudes of sinners will be willing to accept the truth in the day of God's gracious power. No doubt the faithful preaching of the Gospel is the principal agency for demolishing all error and evil ; for destroying systems of heathenism and the false reasoning of men ; for removing ignorance from the mind, and imparting proper ideas of God and duty ; for making men ' wise unto salvation,' and then turning them into missionaries for the good of others. How necessary it is that men in the ministry, employed in such important work, should be men of transparently pure character, singleness of aim, and lofty spiritual purpose ; ' not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God ' ! How necessary, too, that the Church should call out at home and send abroad numerous heralds of the Cross, sustaining her agents by prayer and sympathy as well as by necessary temporal provision, that many may run to and fro, and both theoretical and practical knowledge of God may be abundantly increased ! If ministers have a duty to perform in this respect, the Church has a duty also ; and

the case can only be fully met by the combined fidelity of ministers and people. 'This Gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world,' which is not the case yet, that 'every one may hear in his own tongue, wherein he was born, the wonderful works of God,'—in the Gospel economy. Had the Church of Jesus been more faithful, the history of Fiji and the Friendly Islands might have been repeated in every part of the world, and revivals of religion might have been universal and uninterrupted instead of temporary, local, and occasional. It depends on Christians whether or not the future shall be as the past. It may be the same, or better, or even worse. Shall it not, by the grace of God, be infinitely more glorious? Shall not we who are preachers of the truth avoid mere intellectual display, and keep principally to simple evangelical doctrine, determined, like Paul, to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him as crucified? Preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. Not in any narrow or feeble sense, as some weak, ignorant people would have us do; for we must proclaim the whole Gospel in all its bearings and relationships: yet not studying to frame mere elegant language, or to drag in mere popular bits for the sake of a little fame with persons of itching ears; but with manly sense and soul say straight out what God has given us to testify concerning the Christian redemption, that the faith of the people may not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. And will not Christian hearers look less for a mere Gospel of cold intellect, and more for a Gospel of heart? Not undervaluing intelligence, but not glorying in a Christianity of mere intellectuality, or demanding such a character of preaching from ministers as leaves precious little time for anything but sermonising. We fear the Church of the age is attempting a divorce between head and heart, and luxuriating in an intellectual Christianity, instead of seeking the conversion of sinners.

There must be earnest, unceasing, and sincere prayer for the success of Christianity. Paul said, 'Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified.' (2 Thessalonians iii. 1.) If an inspired apostle needed the prayers of the Church, surely it is so with the uninspired ministers of to-day. We believe in the efficacy of prayer then and now. Probably, if the Church had any adequate conception of the mental difficulties of ministers, any proper notion of the sore temptations peculiar, perhaps, in a great measure to them, ministers would be regularly remembered at a throne of grace. But the one great object for which the Church is to pray is that opposition to Christian aggression may cease, and that the Gospel may go on swiftly, without interruption or rejection, being acknowledged as Divine in its origin and effects. Now this is so when sinners on every hand are enlightened, convinced, and converted; when backsliders are reclaimed; when believers are quickened and moved to noble and daring enterprise for Christ. All this often comes as the answer to prayer. The solemn pledge of Heaven is, 'All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive.' Why, it is sometimes asked, are there not far greater results from the preaching of the Gospel to-day? Probably one main reason is, there is not sufficient prayer on the part of ministers and people. How few before going to church or chapel enter into their closets, and plead with God for a blessing upon the preached Word! How numerous are the discourses that fall upon hearts not previously prepared by prayer and thought! Preaching under such circumstances is very much like casting seed upon land which has neither been ploughed nor harrowed. A good woman once said to a minister, 'I felt it very good under the preaching of the Word this morning; and I felt it very good in my closet before coming to chapel, sir.' The preparation in the closet was probably the secret of the

profitable time under the ministry of the Word. People go to the sanctuary and return home unblest, or only just get a little Christian quickening as the discourse is closing, because they went to God's house hard and cold and unprepared for the solemn exercises of the Christian temple. Prayer links you with the Deity. Prayer is power with God. It is this, or it is nothing. By your prayers you bring down blessings from the skies both upon ministers and congregations, as well as upon the outside world. And as Christians you have a right to pray for what is essential to your own spiritual welfare and necessary for carrying on the work of the Church ; to pray for whatever Scripture authorises you to ask, being for your personal good, the good of others, and the glory of Jesus, and, consequently, being in harmony with the Divine will,—all such things you shall no doubt receive if you pray thus. 'And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He heareth us.' 'If ye abide in Me and My word abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will ; and it shall be done unto you.' But ask you necessarily must, and ask in keeping with the sacred Oracles. Not to persuade God, not to make God willing to bless, for He is infinitely ready to do so. It is we who keep God waiting, not He who keeps us. Nor are we to pray with the idea of giving God information, for He knows all things about us and His cause. The reason of prayer is the fulfilment of a Divine condition. 'Thus saith the Lord God : I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.' (Ezekiel xxxvi. 37.) God's hands are full of blessings. He is standing waiting to give these blessings. They are all purchased and promised. But though He would gladly give them, and is positively waiting for that very purpose, yet He cannot do so unless we ask according to His word. You must pray, or be unblest and unsuccessful in your Church work. You must pray for definite objects,

pray according to Christian truth, pray in submission to the Divine will, pray in deep sympathy with the enterprise for which you plead, pray from proper Christian motives, excluding everything unworthy and selfish, pray with importunity and perseverance, and pray with a firm hand gripping the promises and taking hold upon God. Jacob, Moses, and Elijah prayed; prayed long, and at last succeeded. The disciples prayed long in the upper room, but in the end the promised baptism of the Spirit came. But we too commonly present a few broken, fragmentary petitions to God, and after dictating means and methods to Him, grow impatient and unbelieving because He does not see fit to answer in our way and at our time. And so we abandon prayer as if it were useless and ineffectual. Your child asks again and again and again, and continues asking and expecting till he receives. The beggar at your door urges his petition repeatedly and persistently, and patiently waits for alms. You go to a friend for some favour of great consequence to you, and which he has in his power to grant; you state your case in every possible light, and take sufficient time to do so. But in Christian aggression we hurry over our prayers, and think no more about them; or we pray warmly for a little, and then grow cold and indifferent, and cease our supplications. No earthly business would prosper in this way, nor does the more important business of the Church. 'Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.' If ever the world be converted to Christ, there must be a new era of prayer. We must go to God in the spirit of Jacob and Moses and Elijah. You say, Yes; but these were extraordinary men, and we are of common mould and humble type. The Bible says they were men of like passions with yourselves. They were encompassed with infirmities, were made out of the same lump of humanity,

had their ignorance and weakness like all other servants of God, and were only made grand by Divine grace. The same grace is just as free and powerful for us as for them. Let us bring our whole nature under the power of grace, and let us do so immediately. If we possess any Christian goodness, if we have triumphed over any temptations of Satan, if we have any degree of self-control, any spiritual nobleness, or pure and lofty moral aspirations, we have got all this in answer to prayer. There is no doubt among sincere Christians of the power of prayer. Prayer is the need of our nature and the blessedness of our being. It was a felt need of the Saviour in His great work, and it comforted Him. As He approached the cross He felt all its horrors, and His human nature shrank from the terrible suffering at hand. He went alone for prayer to the Father, just as before He had gone alone for prayer during His active ministry. All showing us that in Christian work we must get and retain our fitness by prayer. All qualification and success in Christian aggression we realise by prayer. If we neglect prayer, we are sure to be defeated in all we attempt for God. He cannot own us, He cannot use us, He cannot bless us or make us a blessing, if we do not constantly go to Him in prayer. This is the condition of success in personal Christianity, and in personal Christian work. We are what we are in religious character and in religious work, according to our praying. While, therefore, we work for the extension and establishment of Christianity, we must continually pray: 'Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.' (Psalm xc. 16, 17.)

In all Christian aggression there must be the exercise of strong and unwavering faith. Matthew Henry says, 'Faith is the soul, prayer is the body; both together make a complete

man for any service. Faith, if it be right, will excite prayer, and prayer is not right if it do not spring from faith.' If we would be proper Christian workmen ourselves, we must constantly combine both duties; pray and believe, believe and pray. Preachers must preach in faith, expecting conversions under every discourse delivered; and people must hear in faith, looking for God to honour and own His appointed means of blessing. In all our efforts to do good, faith must gaze with fixed and steady eye upon the promises, which cannot be broken, being based upon the nature and attributes of God. God has signally honoured faith in all ages, because it has honoured and obeyed Him. But 'without faith it is impossible to please God,' or to succeed in the work of the Church. With strong confidence in the God of the Church, and in the ultimate triumph of Christianity, we must go forth to meet the errors and evils of the times, and to grapple fearlessly with the most formidable opposition of earth and hell. 'This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith'; it is so in the work of the Church as well as in personal religion. The grandest effects have ever followed the strongest faith. We read that 'by faith the walls of Jericho fell'; and many a modern Jericho of infidelity and sin would fall before a believing Church. Christ says to the Church, as He said to Martha, 'Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?' See it in the marvellous success of Christianity; see it as the disciples saw it at Pentecost; see it as Barnabas saw it at Antioch; see it as seen at the Protestant Reformation, and in the revival of religion under Wesley and Whitefield. See, in fact, greater and grander things than these. See a nation born in a day, and a redeemed world converted to Christ. If we did not stagger at the promises through unbelief, all this would be accomplished by a covenant-keeping God. The Church is very much like a poor, ignorant, penitent sinner coming to Christ

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for salvation. That poor, broken-hearted sinner cannot take in the fact that Christ actually waits to save him there and then. So the Church can hardly believe that all the means and resources of God are absolutely placed at her disposal for the subjugation of the world to Jesus. Yet it is so. And to grasp these sublime purposes, to trust God to carry out His own blessed designs, we have to do as the disciples did, and while humbled and staggered to pray, 'Lord, increase our faith.' A believing Church is equal to any enterprise. No weapon formed against her can prosper while she trustfully leans upon the arm of God. Let the soldier of the Cross remember that all things are possible to him that believeth. Spiritual miracles are wrought by faith. 'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove'; and the mountain difficulties would exist no longer. We do not speak of dead beliefs placed upon some shelf in the mind, and doing nothing for anybody; but of an intelligent, consistent, living faith that looks at God rather than difficulties. Hitherto it seems as if the Church, from time to time, had possessed infinitely more faith in difficulties than in the all-wise, all-powerful, and all-loving God. When will believers believe? We trust governments, and consent to live under them; we trust merchants, and make bargains with them; we trust books, and read them; we trust friends, and cling to them: we have faith all round, but lack faith in God. When shall we really believe Him, and believe our Christianity? Yes; and patiently and persistently believe,—believe against appearances, believe notwithstanding Divine delays in fulfilling promises? The fruit is sometimes long in ripening, but all the more mellow and delicious for the delay. So it is with the accomplishment of God's promises, if we can only wait and believe.

But beyond this there must be direct action taken to reach and regenerate the masses of the people. If we pray

and believe for the conversion of men, and then fold our arms without the energetic employment of other means, we are most inconsistent, to say the least. Men do not act thus in common business life. They have their shops and warehouses and offices, but they send out their travellers to solicit orders, and adopt all other necessary appliances for successfully carrying on trade. So it must be with reference to the more important business of the Church. In answer to the believing prayers of His people, God may give His Spirit to enlighten and convince sinners of their sin. It is our duty, then, to put into the hands of these convicted sinners the Word of God, some good book, or religious tract; to speak to them ourselves, or to get some one to speak to them who has influence with them; to invite them to the means of grace and salvation, and to get them, if possible, into the inquiry-room; to do, in fact, any and every reasonable thing to lead them into the kingdom of God. We fear many Christian people conclude they have done all that is required of them when they have simply prayed for poor sinners, with more or less faith in the ability and willingness of God to save the worst. This is largely the weakness of the Church, and the grand cause of her failure. Christians must seek greater practical sagacity in these matters, and prudently follow up their prayers by consistent effort.

There must be the circulation of the sacred Scriptures. The British and Foreign Bible Society we regard as one of the greatest glories of our country. It is the Bible which, in fact, has made, not only England, but Christendom what it is. But for the Bible we could never have reached our proud pre-eminence among the nations. And if we would dispel the clouds of darkness hanging over the minds of men, if we would diffuse the blessed light of heaven, if we would make our brother man acquainted with himself and his everlasting destiny, we must circulate

the Holy Scriptures. The Christian Church ought not to rest till every man in the world has in his possession, and can read for himself, the Word of life. Men must know the truth if the truth is to make them free. They must understand their duty, if they 'would' do it. They must be instructed in their privileges, if they are to live up to them. And the 'entering in' of God's 'Word gives light' on our duties, privileges, relationships, and responsibilities. Compendiums of religious duty and moral philosophy are defective guides; but 'all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' Human legislation is incomplete and destitute of authority in spiritual affairs, and by it we can never become wise unto salvation and find our way to heaven; but 'the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.' Literary moralists and religious novelists attempt to graft Christianity on fallen human nature without first seeking a change of heart; but the Bible shows men that they must be 'born again of the Spirit,' and that unless the tree is made good, it is impossible for good fruit to grow upon it. The Bible, and the Bible only, is the proper law of Christian life: and other books can only aid us so far as they draw inspiration and authority from the Book of books. And recollect, for your encouragement in the circulation of the Scriptures, that the Holy Spirit shines upon the sacred Word as He shines upon no other book. How many have been enlightened and convinced of sin, thoroughly awakened and converted, by the reading of a single passage of the Bible! The Holy Spirit has shed a flood of light upon the understanding and roused the conscience, so that they have immediately discovered the meaning of God's truth, felt its power, and yielded themselves up to its

authority. By the Spirit they have been guided into the truth, into the knowledge of the truth, the experience of the truth, and the practice of the truth. When your sons and daughters leave home and go forth into life to enter upon its temptations and duties, carefully pack up the Bible with their other things, that they may read it and ponder it in their new home, and be saved by it. When workmen and domestic servants receive favours at your hands, be sure to give them the Scriptures, whatever you may give them beside. When you make your presents to friends and relations, do not forget to present them with the best and holiest of books. When you visit the homes of evil and misery, while caring for the body care especially for the soul, and leave them at least some portion of the Scriptures. By all means circulate the grand law of life. The gift of a copy of the sacred Scriptures may result in the everlasting salvation of the receiver, and he may be the crown of your rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. We would have Bible societies established in every town and in every large village, and persons to go from house to house to carry copies of the Scriptures. As all must live for ever, let them know the nature of the life beyond the grave. We think with joy of the large donations made by the British and Foreign Bible Society to various missionary societies. And we hope the day is not far distant when all at home and all abroad will receive light and truth from the fountain itself, the inspired Word, translated into their mother tongue. Whenever circumstances therefore will permit, seek the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom by circulating the laws of the kingdom, the grand instrument of the world's regeneration. Make the Bible the first book with yourself, and the first book with everybody else; and let nothing prevent your becoming well furnished out of this Divine treasury.

Next to the circulation of the Christian Scriptures there

must be the circulation of Christian literature. What a man reads he assimilates, and it becomes part of his mental and moral self. The very insect takes the colour of the leaf it feeds upon. So it is mentally and morally in relation to the reading of people. It must be the settled conviction of every one who has thought upon the subject that a healthy Christian literature is greatly needed. We ought to pray that the literature of our country and of Christendom may be purified. People do and will read; and if not supplied with something better, will read the worthless and depraved books and periodicals which an unsanctified press is continually sending forth to curse and afflict society with an awful moral leprosy. Surely it commends itself to every intelligent lover of his species that good books and periodicals, next to the Bible, should be encouraged and recommended. Very much may be done by a sanctified press. In this age of reading, the press is a marvellous power, and ought to be wielded by the Church to extend her conquests and consolidate her victories. We wonder that Christian people, after reading cheap publications that would greatly aid Christian aggression, do not place them in the hands of tract distributors or home missionaries or sick visitors but pile them up by scores on dusty shelves, and sell them at last as waste paper for the merest trifle, or use them as fire-lighters. If thoughtful people will take the trouble to look into this matter for one moment, they will soon see that this is not the 'more excellent way.' Great sums of money are spent in cheap books for the people, or in the free circulation of the literature of doubt. There is organised effort to spread unbelief of many kinds and in many ways. While we are sleeping the enemy is busy sowing tares among the wheat. Sceptics and Rationalists, on the one hand, and Ritualists on the other, are zealous beyond most of our countrymen who believe in evangelical Christianity in spreading their

theological opinions. It is wonderful how they contrive to get books and periodicals into godly families, and not always by the most honourable means. They do not scruple at trifles if they can accomplish their object; and too commonly the end is held to sanctify their means. They compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and where they succeed, he is often tenfold more the child of evil than themselves, as perverts and converts of all types are mostly more energetic and zealous than people born in any particular belief. Surely if error and unbelief can establish funds for the propagation of false doctrine, evangelical Churches may do the same to spread truth.

Especially we think there ought to be the distribution of Christian tracts. Many people have little leisure, and perhaps less inclination, to commence reading some bulky volume who would willingly undertake the reading of a small pamphlet or tract. And as the reading of the age is so very miscellaneous in its character, with the wisdom of the serpent while we maintain the harmlessness of the dove, we ought to take advantage of this and every other circumstance to reach and regenerate the masses of the ungodly around us. We grant you a tract is a very insignificant and unimportant looking thing; and a tract distributor appears to be playing a very poor part in the aggressive movements of the Church as he quietly wends his way from house to house. But in the name of God let him go on. He has a work to do for the people which eternity alone will fully make known. The value and grandeur of it is far from being properly seen and understood in this state of existence. But we know sufficient to inspire and encourage us. Take a single tract for instance, and calmly calculate the amount of good that one tract may accomplish by the blessing of God. It is circulated through a neighbourhood; it influences a dozen minds; those minds influence other minds; and where and when



the influencing may terminate no one can tell. Thought begets thought, influence begets influence, and in good as well as evil there is a self-propagating power. And if the persons in question are not immediately brought to God, some sin may be prevented, some light diffused, some knowledge of God and His will disseminated. And by enlightening the mind and informing the judgment, to say the least, you render man's salvation more probable than it otherwise would be. Though the persons in question may not now turn to God, the great Spirit may bring things to their remembrance in after life, or on a bed of death even, and, like the dying thief, some may be saved in the eleventh hour as the result of your self-denying labours. It is an extremely painful thing to visit an ignorant and unenlightened person on a bed of death. You feel you have everything to do under the most distressing and disadvantageous circumstances. It is then and there you are best prepared to understand that for the soul to be without knowledge is not good. If it were only to spread the knowledge of the Saviour and His method of saving sinners, we would strongly urge you to place religious tracts in the hands of those around you. Yet we cannot think for one moment that you have done the very best thing if you simply leave a tract at a house, and do not kindly enter into conversation with the people. By going regularly over a given district you get familiar with the people, and the tract is a sort of peg on which to hang a few remarks at a fitting opportunity. And there is not a heart but you may get at if you watch your opportunity, and go the right way about it. The Church too commonly sends the young, the ignorant, and inexperienced in this difficult and important work. We hold that the most intelligent and sagacious, as well as the young or newly converted, should be systematically employed in this splendid sphere of Christian toil. How many have been so

impressed by reading some religious tract that they have found no rest until they sought it in the Saviour! Many a tract has been the instrument in God's hands of saving scores and hundreds of people. *The Dairyman's Daughter*, by Legh Richmond, is a case in point; and *The Sinner's Friend*, by the father of the Rev. Newman Hall, is another. Case after case might be cited of outcasts and prodigals who have been brought to God by tracts. Endeavour to evangelise therefore by the judicious distribution of Christian tracts; and do this work because it helps to counteract the influence of a light and pernicious literature. Some of the best pens the Church can command should be employed in this department, and some of the wisest and most mature Christians engaged in the circulation of the tracts so produced.

There must be Christian education. We are speaking not of the work of the State, but the work of the Church. It is altogether beside the point for us to discuss here whether schools supported by the State should give religious education, and if so, of what character. The point just now before us is that the Church, as such, is bound religiously to educate. If education be exclusively secular, it is one-sided and incomplete. The whole of human nature must be reached and cultivated. The rising race must have Christian as well as purely secular instruction. In addition to efficient day-schools, there must be equally efficient Sabbath-schools, as an important way of making aggression upon the kingdom of darkness. Beside Sabbath-school instruction, there must be instruction imparted in Christian families, and the duty of Christian parents must not be put upon Sunday-school teachers, as we fear is too commonly the case. It is sometimes said the Sunday-school is the nursery of the Church. It would be far more correct to say the Christian family is. This is no doubt what God intends the Christian family to be. The Sabbath-school is

a nursery of the Church, but not *the* nursery of the Church in the arrangement and economy of God. But the Sunday-school is a glorious and fruitful sphere of Christian labour. It is almost impossible to over-estimate its importance and value to the Christian Church. The young people gathered about us will soon be the men and women who will occupy our stations in life, who will be the Church members and Church officers and carry on God's cause when we are sleeping in our narrow bed. Alas, then, for the future generations of men, if we do not leave a religious heritage to our own children, and to young people generally! How much depends on our example and instruction for the future welfare of our country and of Christendom it is impossible to say. How powerful for good or for evil is the youthful population of our land! If the young be allowed to grow up without religious principles and education, woe to England! First impressions are deep and lasting, and almost incapable of being obliterated. If right impressions are not made, wrong ones will not be wanting. The seeds of evil are already sown in the nature of the young, and will be developed by future circumstances, unless we carefully endeavour to check and uproot them. Fallen human nature, ever prone to evil, will do its work, the devil will do his work, the world will do its work,—all that is evil will combine to effect the spiritual ruin of the rising race; and if we neglect our work, it requires little foresight to predict utter and irretrievable loss to society generally, and the Church in particular. How deep and tender ought the care of the Church to be for the young! In Sunday-schools, in catechumen classes, in young men's improvement classes, in Bible classes, in select religious classes of all sorts, now becoming so abundant for young people in all Churches, you are to plant and rear trees of righteousness, which shall flourish in the courts of the Lord's house, to impart and foster principles which shall give firmness and strength to future character, and produce fathers

and mothers in Israel who shall be a blessing to the Church and the world when you are laid low in the dust. It is yours to give direction to thought and feeling, to give proper tendency to the will, to bend the whole powers and energies of the mind toward God. And by His grace you may do it, may, in fact, do all but actually convert young people to Christ. The power God gives you is positively marvellous. While the heart is tender and impressible you may almost mould it as you wish. But if you allow the present opportunity to pass, the soul will never be so sensitive and pliable again. It is God's ordination and arrangement that people shall be converted to Him early. It is far easier to become Christian young. The world, the flesh, and the devil have not the same hold upon people when young as in after life; and evil habits have not fastened chains upon them almost impossible to break. If you are determined, by God's grace you may make them into Christians, and send them forth to evangelise society; but if you allow the present opportunity to pass, if you sacrifice the glorious morning of life, the probability is that they will go forth into life, spreading moral blight and desolation around them wherever they go. Do not forget it is impossible for any to be neutral characters on earth. The world is either made better or worse by the actual living of everybody in it. Let these considerations lead you to make frequent, direct, and earnest appeals to your own children to give their hearts to God, to train them up in the way they should go, to rear them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; exercising the greatest possible wisdom in this work, for sometimes there is a manifest defect of prudence where there is not a manifest defect of piety. Let the foregoing remarks, not only lead you to deep concern for the conversion of your own offspring, but for the conversion of the children of other people, and to assist, as far as possible, in the Christian education and training of the world. As the result of recent changes,

the Church, in England, has to care more and more for the spiritual interests of children. The meaning of Scripture should be impressed with greater force and frequency upon the hearts of Sunday scholars, direct and solemn appeals should be made to them practically to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and they should be carefully trained to work for God. Christian education, in its breadth and completeness, should now enter into the plans and purposes of the Church with greater power and earnestness than heretofore. It is hard to get old sinners converted, and comparatively easy to get young ones converted. And for all aggressive Christian work, one young person is worth a dozen old and worn-out people, who can only consecrate the dregs of existence to the spread of Christianity. Young people can offer a life of labour to Jesus. The Church of to-day must rouse herself to the unspeakable importance of seeking the conversion and complete training of the young. The easy-going methods of the past will not do for the present age. Now there is greater activity in every department of life than formerly. It must be so in the Church as well as in the world. The truth must not only be read, but explained and applied to the hearts of the children. Prayer meetings should be frequently held in the Sabbath-school, and earnest appeals made to the scholars there and then to begin to serve God. All should be done that is prudent to get them into the inquiry-room, and to induce them to meet in some preparatory Society class. Every Sunday-school teacher should often speak to his scholars, during the lesson, about the advantage and blessedness of early piety. It is sometimes asked, What is to be done to retain the elder scholars in the Sabbath-school? The most effectual method is to get them converted to Christ. Whatever best leads to conversion is best to be adopted to secure the highest and most lasting interests of the schools.

Revival missions should be held for children. We have our revival missions for adults, why not for young people? A week of special services might occasionally be held, and all the sermons and addresses exclusively be given to the children. This has been tried in some instances with beneficial results. And where a revival mission is conducted for adults, a short children's service might be held before the public service for the people. If young children can learn Latin, music, and arithmetic, can learn to read and write and draw, surely they can learn what Christianity is, and feel its saving power. In the nineteenth century of Christianity the Church has largely to learn the importance of her mission to children. When a revival has occurred, and many young people have been brought to Christ, the contracted souls in the Church have said, 'Oh, they were for the most part only children.' The Church of Rome knows the value of children. The Ritualists teach little children to confess. The twig is bent while young and tender, and the Church should bend the thought and heart of the child to Jesus as a grand way of making aggression on the kingdom of Satan. Of course little children should not be spoken to and treated as if they were old, notorious sinners. The child should be dealt with as a child: not probably openly profane, yet consciously evil, and needing a Saviour to save him from many little sins, such as occasionally telling an untruth, yielding to evil tempers, disobedience to parents in important matters, and the neglect of what he knows to be right. When children come to years of responsibility, whether baptized or not, they know and feel they need the converting grace of God. And in children's meetings there is a good opportunity of dealing with them specially and individually, as you cannot well in mixed congregations. The Church has greatly erred in neglecting to bring children into close connection with herself, waiting

till they get into their teens before they were asked to seek Jesus and join in Christian communion. Thousands upon thousands are found in our large towns who have passed through Sunday schools, and never been to church or chapel since they left the Sabbath-school. Some of these are the most evil people in the whole community. Surely all methods should be tried to secure the conversion of children, and to keep them connected with the Church afterwards.

Bible classes should be established in connection with Sabbath schools and Christian congregations. Right men should be put to this special kind of work, or the whole thing will issue in failure. It is necessary to get young people interested in the lessons given in Bible classes ; and for this purpose the lessons must be made instructive and entertaining. This implies the thorough preparation of lessons. The teacher must make the lesson the earnest study of the week, turning it over in his mind again and again, seeking all sorts of facts and illustrations to make the truth clear and impressive. Thoughtful young people who have had the advantage of a modern day-school education refuse to stay in a Sunday school where they cannot get fresh information ; and these are especially the kind of young people the Church needs for future work. It is perhaps more difficult to teach the senior classes in the Sunday-school, and to conduct Bible classes during the week, than to teach adults. And those teachers who spend nearly all their time over newspapers and novels are not likely to exercise great power in their class. The effort should be to create a strong moral tone in the school generally, and especially in the select classes. Where these classes are taught in a vestry, the teacher might pray briefly either before or after the lesson. This must produce its effect on the heart of children, though for years they might not manifest any sign of serious thought

and feeling. We fear children too seldom hear their teachers pray for them. But above all the teacher must *be* what he wishes the children to *become*. The children can feel what a teacher is, just as a congregation can feel what a minister is. This may be difficult to explain, but it is almost a self-evident fact: a kind of spiritual electricity circulates between human hearts. And whatever else is done children must be carried to God in the arms of faith and prayer. Let no teachers easily yield to discouragement because, as they think, they are unequal to the work assigned them. God can overrule our errors and mistakes, and even make our blunders our successes; for when we are weakest in His work we are often the strongest.

There ought also to be the establishment of young men's improvement classes. Such classes should be made instructive, the medium of communicating something more than the mere elementary principles of Christianity. Young men, in these days, should be armed against infidelity, and not left in traditional beliefs, which too commonly give way before the strength of temptation and the subtle reasoning of men. The main roads of moral knowledge should be carefully marked out for them, and they should be repeatedly advised to keep on these main roads when moral difficulties occur in life. The president of a young men's class has many opportunities of lodging a leading truth in the mind, and leaving it to do its work there. Young men should be taught to think definitely, to think for themselves, and to give expression to thought. This may be done by their writing papers and delivering short addresses, as well as speaking during the discussion of essays. And so they may learn to defend Christianity as well as thoroughly and intelligently to believe it. We think the Churches would do well to establish good libraries and reading-rooms, and to do all in their power to form a taste for healthy Christian literature among young men. Very much depends on the selection of suit-

able books. You have two things before you : to awaken and guide thought. If you cannot succeed in doing this the animal nature will predominate over the spiritual and intellectual ; and so young men will seek the gratification of their lower nature in evil places and in forbidden things, leaving the Church of their fathers and of their earliest years. Much might be done to prevent this sad occurrence by the above-named classes. And when Bible classes and young men's improvement classes are established, the aim should be to make them training institutions for Church work. Not simply classes to give information, to cram the mind with knowledge, but to prepare for service ; classes in which young men may learn to use their knowledge, and give out blessing as well as take in good. In fact, such classes ought to be made an aggressive force, preparation classes for workers, and not a mere means of intellectual luxury and enjoyment. We either find the young too little to do, and so do not give them sufficient interest in God's cause ; or we send them untrained into the vineyard of Christ. Both are grave errors to be avoided by the Church. How can we reasonably expect young men, who have had no advantages, to grow fit to carry on the work of Christian aggression without aid and training ? And if they have had the advantage of a good education and an intelligent Christian home, they still need care and help and leading on in methods of usefulness. The young officers must learn the drill as well as the rank and file in the army. But the Church has too commonly sent out her armies without taking them on the parade ground and teaching them the use of arms. God will help we know, and without Him we can do nothing in the battles of the Church. But at the same time, we ought to do all we humanly can to secure victory. Those especially who lead on the armies of the living God should be instructed and trained. Efficient officers are more necessary in the armies of the Church than

in the armies of the nation. Much may be done for the Church generally in young men's improvement classes, and much may be done for Sunday-schools in particular, in teachers' preparation classes; and both are good if properly conducted.

Open-air services should be held. There are multitudes of people who never go to church or chapel. How are we to reach and raise them spiritually, unless we carry the Gospel to them? If they will not come to us, we must go to them. This is precisely what Christ did, what the great reformers did, what John Wesley did. We must seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel, seek them in order to save them under God. The tree grows from the root, the building rises from the foundation, and the method of Christianity is to begin at the base of society, as illustrated by the ministry of Christ and the apostles, that all may be brought to know God from the *least* to the *greatest*. The Christians of the age are too ready to remain in respectable and comfortable churches and chapels, like an army remaining shut up in forts instead of going out to offer battle to the enemy. God helping us, we must, in one way or other, get at the great masses of the people. It is all very well to luxuriate in beautiful sermons, in beautiful places of worship; but what of the ignorant, degraded, dying millions of our countrymen? Shall we not think of them in our cushioned pews and splendid sanctuaries, while listening to intellectual discourses that thrill and charm us? Shall we not give up some portion of ease and intellectual enjoyment to elevate the masses of the people? Shall we not do it out of love to the Saviour and His great work? Is not this one form of self-denial, of taking up the cross and following Christ, which the educated and wealthy Christians of the age should consent to? Too commonly the conduct of open-air services has been left to poor, ignorant, but sincere, godly men; and it is greatly to their credit that they have done this work; but

the neglect of it is largely to the reproach of rich Christians. Men of position and intelligence should give their influence to this good work, and not leave the public to sneer at the ignorance of the open-air advocates of Christianity. And those who can interest the young should get up open-air services for children. Much good might be done by a children's open-air mission, especially at the sea-side and in the great centres of population during the summer months. If, in some instances, on fine summer evenings, the services were shorter in our churches and chapels, and the whole congregation after an hour's service turned out into the streets to do work there for God, either all keeping well together or dividing themselves into two or three companies and holding separate open-air meetings, it seems to us it would do both ministers and people good. Much of course would depend upon the strength of a particular Church in making its arrangements; but a weak Church would be likely to recruit its strength by this kind of work, as it would very probably bring out and develop the latent virtues of its members, and at the same time be a good advertisement for the Church in its own immediate neighbourhood. The Churches, generally, have adopted what has been called the magnet principle, and sought a popular minister to draw the people. Would it not be as well, and, in most instances better, to adopt the drag-net principle, and for the whole Church force to be employed in gathering the people into the Church? Work makes the members better and stronger, while it is also beneficial for the world.

Cottage meetings should be held in poor and neglected neighbourhoods. During a great part of the year it is not fit to hold open-air services, at least it is not fit for delicate persons. Strong men may take their stand under a lamp-post, and get a few hearers who would be ashamed to be seen at a religious service in the open air by daylight, but would, like Nicodemus, come by night, and take their stand for a

short time a little away from the people, at the very outskirts of the congregation. We must adapt ourselves to weather and seasons and localities. How many back streets there are in our large towns and cities, and how many villages in thinly and densely populated districts, where there is no preaching of the Gospel; and how many more in which the Gospel is only occasionally preached, with painful irregularity and at long intervals! Here a band of earnest Christian men might go, pray with and for the people, and, like Barnabas at Antioch, exhort the people with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord. We fear many good men are lost to the Church in her aggressive enterprise, because they do not enter some such sphere of usefulness. Here they might find fitting employment and be blest and strengthened while blessing the souls of others. If men cannot preach in the capacity of ordained ministers, is that any valid reason why they should not go, and in homely phrase persuade men to flee from the wrath to come? Every variety of gift is given to the Church for use, and ought to be turned to account. And the members of the Church are responsible for the faithful use of their gifts; not for talents they do not possess, but for those God has conferred upon them. When He comes to reckon with them He will not blame or commend on the ground of many or few talents; but because they have used them well or neglected to do so, He will say, Depart from Me, or, Come, ye blessed. As in summer we follow the people into the streets and lanes, let us in winter follow them into the houses, and 'by all means save some.' In this way multitudes may be brought to hear the Word of the kingdom, and possibly find the Pearl of great price; and good, earnest men may be kept spiritually strong instead of becoming spiritually feeble, and perhaps backsliders in heart and life.

Christians must speak plainly and affectionately to their relations and neighbours about the great salvation of

God. Whenever and wherever we can prudently do it, we must urge our friends to give themselves to Christ's blessed service; and better we should blunder a little than not speak at all. They will understand and appreciate our motives. Nor must we fear planting the seed of the kingdom in unpromising soil, for sometimes the most unlikely are converted first. Harlots and publicans and thieves frequently enter the kingdom of God before outwardly moral people, who have been lingering all their lives on the threshold of the kingdom. What good may be done by watching a favourable opportunity, and then entering into religious conversation with people! When they are alone, in vacant or pensive mood, or when afflicted or disappointed or peculiarly tried by Providence, or after listening to some impressive discourse from the pulpit, you may talk to them pointedly with great advantage. They wonder you do not speak to them; sometimes they come and walk by your side from the house of God to give you an opportunity to start a serious conversation, and you, perhaps, begin to find fault with the sermon, instead of doing earnest business for the Master. A poor woman said: 'My heart was sad: I wished somebody would ask me to join the Church. I felt shy and backward, and did not like to go and introduce myself; and my own boy, who was a member, invited me to join Society. It was hard and humbling that my own boy should have to take me by the hand and lead me to the Saviour.' We believe there are thousands in the same state of deep religious feeling at one time or other who are never spoken to by any one. And we may get at every heart, and impress it if we go the right way about our work. We shall need to have all our wits about us. And why should not personal Christianity form a subject of conversation? We talk about all imaginable earthly things, but are reticent about heavenly things. Contrary to the purpose of Christ,

we keep our religion a profound secret between ourselves and God. Spread your Christianity by recommending it to all around at every fitting opportunity. Tell everybody that the mercy which sought and saved you is seeking to save them. And specially aid those who are beginning to come to Jesus. A poor, feeble Yorkshire Christian, a man of no education and of no intellectual gifts, was instrumental in leading five or six persons to the Saviour and to join the Church of Christ in the course of three years. Had any thoughtful man been asked who would do a thing like that in a certain Christian society, the man who did it would have been the very last selected as likely to accomplish such a work. All he did was kindly, in his own simple way, to ask them to go to the house of God, then by-and-by, when he saw they were feeling, he requested them to come into closer fellowship with God's people. Were people of one talent to do work in this way, what might not the whole Church accomplish in a short time? Mostly the failure of the Church is the failure of the members with one talent, who think they can do so little that they sit down and do absolutely nothing at all. But people of greater gifts would find it profitable and easy work to talk to men and women about personal salvation. Commercially speaking, it is work that pays. It rewards us in our own souls, and in additions to our membership.

There must be house-to-house visitation by the members of the Church. Of course ministers and office bearers must take their proper position in relation to this work. But the work can never be done by them exclusively; neither is it their exclusive duty. 'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.' (James i. 27.) Now, this is not official piety, but the duty of religion in all its professors. You who are Christian must regard it as part of

your Christianity to do the work of household visitation as you have opportunity. Ministers and Church officers could not overtake the great populations within reasonable time were they to neglect everything else. And so many a poor widow would remain uncheered in her solitude, and many an orphan would have nothing but an orphan's bitter and forlorn hope. Beside, the visitation spoken of by the Saviour, recorded in the Gospel by Matthew (chapter xxv.), was not done by ministers alone, but by 'the righteous.' This is too commonly lost sight of by Christians, and visitation is hardly considered properly religious unless done by ministers. To this work the Church must ungrudgingly give her very best men, and the whole Church force should be employed in this work as far as is consistent with proper attention to the other departments of Church work. The Church is too little aggressive in spirit and act. Why should not a good man living among unconverted neighbours be held responsible for visiting those around him, and asking them to the house of God? We more than ever believe in a Christian man having a little seed-plot of his own, and cultivating that for God. Not in wasting time and strength in going a long way off to seek spiritual employment, but doing the work his hand finds to do, the work just at his finger ends. Do the work that is nearest you, and this will prepare the way for other work. And if a man's character be what it ought to be, he will have most influence where he is best known. Now, is it not wise to utilise personal influence for the Saviour and for the community? Begin to visit the ungodly families in the very street or village in which you live. Go to those who daily witness your own spirit and example. Tell them they know and see godliness is a good thing in your case, and that it may be so in theirs if they will but give themselves to God.

There must be the employment of Bible-women, Scrip-

ture-readers, and lay home missionaries. The agents of Satan are constantly at work in the most degraded localities, and the agents of Christ should be always at work, too, in order to undo the evil and bring about a righteous state of society. Not that these agents should set aside, but evoke, develop, and systematise voluntary agency. Working men cannot earn their living, support their families, and give all their time to Church work. Merchants and manufacturers cannot attend to commerce and at the same time work uninterruptedly for God among the outcasts of society. It seems reasonable enough that fitting men and women should be employed to work all the day where Satan's seat is, and earth is made as nearly like hell as the devil and his agents can make it. And villages might be visited by lay agents, carrying with them copies of the Scriptures and Christian literature, reading and praying with the people at every opening. God has placed at the service of the Church a vast spiritual power of this kind, which the Church has been slow to use. Surely wiser and better days are at hand. This lay agency is far more suitable for certain kinds of work than any agency we know of at present existing. And we should not forget that the Saviour sent the seventy to do rough, pioneering work,—sent them two and two simply to proclaim the nearness of the kingdom of God, and to do this in all the places where He Himself was about to go, more fully propounding Christianity; and sent these seventy as well as ordained to the regular ministry the twelve apostles. And though we do not hear any more of these seventy after they had speedily done their work and given in their account, yet the fact as a fact is deeply significant. When there is work to be done for God we must do it, and do it by the most suitable agency the Lord provides for us. The Church of Rome has not hesitated to establish a new order for a special purpose; and so work has been provided

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for all talents and temperaments, and Rome has succeeded while, in many instances, Protestantism has languished. By all legitimate means and methods we must help on in these days the cause of the Cross.

All kinds of benevolent institutions should be extensively established to aid Christian aggression. The Church should really become what her Divine Founder intended—a philanthropic Church. Ragged schools, reformatory schools, bands of hope, penny savings banks, sick benefit societies, as well as hospitals and asylums for the afflicted, the destitute, and the dying should be established and supported by Christian people. God's prophet says: 'Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.' (Isaiah i. 17.) Christ 'went about doing good'; and we know from His biographies He did good to the bodies of the people as well as to their souls. We must imbibe His Spirit and copy His example. In some instances we must do good to the soul by doing good to the body. By bettering man's temporal condition we must get at his heart, break down his prejudice, and melt him into contrition before God. We fear the Church has not always sufficiently stood by man's material interests, though we are aware infidelity has nothing to boast of in the same line. Some have dated their first impressions against Christianity from the fact of seeing so little Christian charity in the world. Had the Church been more wisely philanthropic, probably the working population would not have been so extensively alienated from her services. Working men have been an easy prey to all sorts of lecturers against Christianity, because the Church seemed so little concerned for the temporal interests of men. It has often seemed as if Christianity was entirely for the soul, and did not concern itself with the body at all. At least, it has not always been sufficiently transparent that the Church as a Church has cared deeply for the merely human.

That Christ and the early Christians cared for the body of man as well as his soul was so evident that no one could doubt it for one moment. It is well for us to return to the early spirit and methods of the Church of Christ. We should like to see various temporal helps clustering round individual Churches. We do not mean ill-judged charity, which weakens character and so commonly renders men incapable of helping themselves, but all sorts of means to foster thrift and teach self-help, as well as to aid the destitute. The aged and the helpless must be supported, and the temporal interests of society generally must enter into the concern of the Church. To do this kind of work is to remove one obstacle to the progress of the Gospel in many quarters.

There are many miscellaneous means to be employed to help on the progress of the Gospel into which it is not necessary to enter at length, but which we may briefly notice in passing. There ought to be extensive advertising in one form or other. Publicity is essential to men of business, to managers of theatres, and to candidates for parliamentary election; and we all know how they contrive in every possible way to secure the attention of the public. So it ought to be with the Church. The city is to be placed on the hill; the lighted candle is not to be put under a bushel, but on a candlestick, to give light to all in the house. And so we are to let our light shine, that others may see it, and glorify God through us. Bring the light before the public, call the attention of men to the facts of your existence and organisation as a Church, and let people know that you are ready to help them to Christ. Other men would never get on in various spheres of life if they acted as many Christian Churches do. The Church as a whole has, perhaps, never yet fully appreciated the importance of publicity, but too commonly gone on quietly and unknown, for the most part in some back street or out-of-the-way place, and not had the courage to venture forth

into the clear, broad daylight. The day for this stand-still policy is gone by in England. In times of persecution Christians were glad to get into quiet hiding-places; but with liberty of conscience and worship, we must come to the front and keep before the public; indeed, we must carry the war into the camp of the enemy. Handbills, leaflets, cards of invitation must be freely distributed. Bands of men, and especially young men, should go, say some half hour before service, and wherever they see groups of people in the streets, ask them to public service, and place printed invitations in the hands of such people. And as Christian men go to and from the public worship of God on the week-day and on the Sabbath, and also as they go to and from business, they should freely distribute cards of invitation to the worship of almighty God. Why should God's business be done worse than the business of men? God's business is a great deal more important and necessary, and so it ought to be done a great deal better than any of our own. But it has not always been so.

Among the miscellaneous means to be employed to save the masses of the community, meetings should be held for railway porters, cabmen, omnibus conductors and drivers, the barge population, soldiers and sailors. All these claim our sympathy and attention, and should be embraced in the systematic efforts of the Church. There is another thing to be done we almost shrink from dwelling on, while our heart is sore about it: midnight meetings should be held for fallen women. We might write a sad and long chapter on this subject, partly from personal knowledge, but at present forbear. A lay missionary, in Manchester, was requested by the parents of a girl who had gone astray if possible to seek her out. He found her, and said, 'My dear girl, how came you to get into this way?' 'Nay, sir, nay, sir,' she said; 'it is not how did I get into it, but how can I get out of it?' Oh! the hearts of these poor creatures are raw and bleeding,

and some of them, at times, would gladly reform ; but it is impossible without help. Nobody will take them in, and find them employment ; and many of them, without aid, are physically incapable of working. And the world is cold and hard about them, and the Church is indifferent, and so the iron enters their heart, and they are allowed to sink deeper and deeper in degradation and misery year by year. May we so far claim indulgence from the Christian reader as to plead with all the earnestness we can command for these poor outcasts ? You who have sons and daughters of your own, and you who teach in Sunday-schools, will you not help to rescue these unhappy beings ? Rather pity than blame them, though blame you must. Take the method Jesus took with them, and do not condemn them so much as try to help them to virtue. If you knew all, you might weep over them, if you had a heart left in you, for often they are more sinned against than sinning. Many of them have been in Sunday-schools, many of them have been members of Christian Churches, many of them have come out of Christian families, and they never intended or thought of getting wrong, and cannot forget the past. Will you pray for them, and praise God that grace has kept you from the lowest depths of evil, as nothing but grace could ?

May we further claim indulgence for just one other point under this head of miscellaneous means to aid, in perhaps an indirect way, the progress of the Church ? The recreation of young people must be guarded. We know it is very difficult to speak on a subject like this. Ignorant, unwise, and narrow-minded people may disapprove. But young people need recreation, it is necessary for health, and it must be provided of a rational and Christian kind ; and the Church must not, by mistaking narrowness for goodness, alienate the young by insisting upon non-essentials as vital things. Probably many Christian ministers would have been much more healthy, and better

able to do earnest work for Christ, had not the Church in her weakness and prejudice been too ready to condemn many kinds of perfectly innocent recreation. So ministers have had to live a sort of unnatural life in many cases, to keep from offending weak consciences; yet we believe the law of liberty is rightly abridged by the law of charity, though we think there is a more excellent way. Recruiting physical strength need not, and ought not, to hinder earnest spiritual work for the blessed Saviour and the souls of men.

There must be liberal giving to keep the whole Church force at work. We know ministers may preach any gospel but the gospel of giving; yet giving is in the sacred volume. Christianity should be the death of selfishness and the birth of Christ-like benevolence. All selfishness is opposed to Christianity, opposed to the Divine nature, and opposed to the Divine conduct. God is love,—giving rather than receiving. Selfishness has long existed in the world, and now it has found its way into the Church, crippling all efforts to regenerate the world. This selfishness in our age and nation takes the particular form of the love of money. But our love to God and to the perishing souls of men should completely conquer and overcome our love of money. Property is to be held in trust for God. He says, ‘All the earth is Mine.’ All we possess should be sanctified and consecrated to Him. What might not the Church have accomplished in the past had Christians only given as God had prospered them. When will Christian men make money, not for the enjoyment of luxuries, not to accumulate a great fortune, but to honour Christ and spread Christianity? What would some wealthy Christians have been, socially speaking, but for the principles and habits created and fostered by Christianity? Should Christian men make money simply to hoard? Is it not nobler, happier, and in every way better to make money for the cause of God? Beside, it is hard to say whether wealth will be a blessing or a curse to

their offspring. Perhaps as many are cursed by it as are blest by it in regard to the spirit and the eternal future. The income of a single dukedom is about as great, in some cases, as the income of all the foreign missionary societies in Great Britain put together. And yet we call ourselves a Christian nation. When a man's cigars cost him more than his Christianity, there is clearly something wrong somewhere. When a man will spend fifty times more on mere pleasure than he gives to the cause of God, he cannot be right, and must feel painful condemnation on his dying bed and at the judgment. When a subscription is asked for some important department of the work of the Church, and a man says, 'I should have been exceedingly happy to give you what you ask, but I have recently made an important investment, and so I cannot help you at all,'—the inquiry arises, Have men a moral right to invest so as to be unable to give a proper proportion of their income to carry on the world's evangelisation? Is it Christian to attend to ourselves first, and only to give to God what is left? Do we not owe everything to God? Did we not get all from God? Are we not simply stewards of what we possess, and not proprietors? And since it is so, should not wealth be consecrated to God's service as freely and fully as any good gift of God? We are in every way debtors to God, and ought not to spend on personal pleasures and luxuries what morally belongs to God. When we think of what Christianity has done for us and ours, we cannot reasonably grudge liberal contributions to carry on the work of God. Were we to look at the matter in a commercial aspect, Christianity is cheaper than sin; and it surely ought not to be, since it is infinitely happier and worthier. We all know the expensiveness of evil habits; should we not be willing to pay more for the comfort of better habits? This is taking the lowest views, but the highest views bind us to Christian liberality infinitely more than all selfish considerations.

The Church must perpetually keep all these means and methods of Christian aggression in operation : like a student carrying on a great number of studies, like the manufacturer carrying on all sorts of operations in his mill, like the government conducting many departments and each minister of state superintending his own special kind of work. The whole Church force must work in every possible way and always be at work, warning, beseeching, inviting, not by fits and starts, but as regular work, without which we cannot hope for success. Some say the Sunday-school is everything, and if the young are looked after properly, everything will go on prosperously. Some say visiting is everything, and if this be fully attended to the Church is sure to succeed, that a house-going minister makes a church-going people. Some say tract distribution is everything, and if we only get these properly circulated we are sure to fill our places of worship and make people seriously disposed. Some say preaching is everything, and a pulpit properly filled will fill a church or chapel. Some say open-air meetings are everything, and if we only go after the people properly we shall be sure to get hold of them for Christ. All think the work they are engaged in the all-important work to be done, and all beside is comparatively insignificant, and so they urge ministers and members to attend to that particular department. Now the fact is, all are important departments, and perfectly right if kept in their right place ; and all departments must be properly taken care of and kept in operation. There must be working by all means and methods *as a whole* ; finding all the members of the Church something to do, work for which they are most fit, and keeping them always at work. This keeps them from getting wrong, saves them from quarrelling, and robs Satan of many of his grandest opportunities of leading them into evil ways. It is *work* that succeeds by the blessing of God, the work of the whole

Church. If the farmer never put in the seed, would he ever reap a harvest? No; nor will the Church. And as many labourers are required in the operations of farming, so it is in the Church.

Now, as God intends the Church to be a witnessing and soul-saving organisation, she must endeavour to perform her high and holy duty by the foregoing means and methods, or any additional ones that may commend themselves to the Christian judgment and intelligence of the Church from time to time. While all nature witnesses for God in its own way and sphere, the Church must witness for Him spiritually. Nature is silent in a thousand instances, and to the most anxious questions of the heart it gives forth no response. But the Church, as the repository of God's truth, is able to give clear and satisfactory answers to the inquiries of troubled souls. The Church is the witness for Christ as to His great mediatorial work; the witness of His pledge and power to save penitent believers in Him; the witness of the truth and reality of Gospel privileges and blessings. And as the design of the Church is to witness for God and save the race, there must be the organised effort we have contended for to evangelise the unsaved millions at home and abroad. Yes, and the ways and means of the past must substantially be the ways and means of the future. We are free to own that we have no faith whatever in the revival of the age of miracles and tongues. Ordinary and not miraculous agency will accomplish the work of the world's evangelisation. The very means and resources which the Church has now in her possession will meet every possible case. Only let her present means be fully developed and employed, and the world will soon be converted to Christ. She has now the ministry of the Word, the holy Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, and the grace of supplication. And by the same Gospel, the same Spirit, and the use of the same means of grace and salvation, all

must be brought to Christ. God will not give another Gospel, another Spirit, another order of grace and truth; nor will He appoint angels instead of men to preach His Word, nor supersede the prayers and efforts of His people by miracles and tongues. We must not look for something we do not already possess, and sit at ease in Zion till some sort of irresistible and overwhelming influence comes upon society, and creates all things new. And though we believe in the ultimate extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we hold that it will be in answer to the believing prayers of His people. The Church must save the world; Christian effort must convert the ignorant and the erring. All Scripture and Church history show this. 'Give ye them to eat,' said Christ to the disciples when feeding the multitude with a few loaves and fishes. He provided the means, His servants had to dispense His gracious gifts. And as long as the disciples gave away bread to the hungry the bread multiplied for the need of the people; and as long as the Church communicates Gospel blessings to the world, the Word will grow and multiply. We can draw to any amount upon the resources of Christ in the evangelisation of men: and these resources will never fail us; they are infinite and inexhaustible. But we must use the means He has provided and ordained. When He appeared to Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus, that notorious persecutor of the Christians did not receive immediately from God a complete revelation of Divine truth and human duty; the Lord said to Saul, 'Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.' And when Saul arrived in Damascus 'a vision' came, not to Saul himself, remember, but to a certain man named Ananias; and Ananias was sent to Saul, that Saul might both obtain sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. When the angel of the Lord was sent on a message of mercy, the angel, who might personally have appeared to the Ethiopian eunuch,

did not do so, but sent Philip to meet the chariot of the stranger, and to expound to the eunuch the prophecies concerning Christ. An angel was directly commissioned to Cornelius, and we should have naturally supposed that the heavenly messenger would tell Cornelius everything necessary about the method of salvation. No ; men were to go to Joppa for Peter, who, on his arrival, would inform Cornelius what it was necessary to do. So far as we can see, therefore, God intends that Christian men shall instrumentally regenerate the nations. We must become workers together with God in this momentous enterprise. The Divine and the human are to be linked together in this as in other instances. God is the great Worker, has worked in the everlasting past, and will work in the everlasting future ; will ever work for the universal establishment of Christianity. But He does not work apart from human agency. It is so in natural and mental and spiritual things. God gives seed, and makes it grow ; but the farmer has to plough the land and put in the seed. God gives light ; but man has to make the windows, when he builds public halls, to let in the light. God gives mind ; but man has to read and observe in order to cultivate intellect, as God does not learn our lessons for us. The principle operates in all evangelistic work. God has given revelation ; but men have to translate and print and circulate the Scriptures. God gives missionaries ; but the Church must send them to the distant nations. God gives money and opportunities and grace ; but the Church must use the Divine gifts. And the Church in this business must feel and act like her Lord and Head, who said, ' I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day ; the night cometh when no man can work.' We must feel the supremacy of labour, the absolute need of being up and doing while the daylight lasts. The ' I must ' of Jesus should be thoroughly burnt into every Christian heart : I dare not live, I dare not die, I dare not

face the Judge at last, unless I have finished the work He has given me to do ; and 'the night cometh' when I cannot work if I would,—a long, dark, painful night for all idlers who have left a large amount of work unfinished. In ordinary life, when the night comes, the builder lays by his trowel, the farm labourer puts by his spade, and the ploughman leaves his plough in the unfinished furrow ; but these men begin by the morning light, where they left off the previous evening. But it is not so in spiritual work for God. It must be done 'while it is day,' or not at all. The love of Christ must constrain us, thrill, charm, and completely possess us in this great work for Him and for others, like a vessel borne along by wind and tide, like a great flood carrying all before it, like a poet or patriot possessed by some mighty inspiration. It must be the consideration of Christ's love to us rather than our love to Christ. If we work for Christ from the side of our love to Him, we can soon exhaust that motive ; but if we work from the side of His love to us, we can never exhaust that. We must seek in Christ rather than ourselves for reasons prompting us to work ; and must think of His love as the love of a living Christ, an ever-present and powerful love, as real at this moment as when He bled upon the cross. And if in this way and spirit we use the Divinely appointed means to convert men and help forward the glorious Gospel we must succeed ; but if we indifferently employ the means to save men, or altogether neglect to do so, failure will attend the cause of the Cross. Two things are therefore sufficiently clear to the Church, that she must use the Divinely-ordained means, and how. Without work she cannot even hope to get on, and without work done in a proper spirit. As in commerce, as in agriculture, as in literature, as in art, so in the Church there must be hard work to succeed. And this work must be done in a pure, loving, believing, and zealous spirit. Christ Himself must

be our pattern in spirit and in labour. 'Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.' (Mark x. 45.) He came not to serve Himself but to minister to the well-being of others. It was a blessed ministry for the temporal, intellectual, and spiritual advantage of others. It was a blessed ministry for others culminating in death. Our life, like His, must be a ministry of self-sacrificing and self-denying labour for the good of men, only terminating in death. If the life of Christ has one lesson to teach us above another, it is that the loftiest aspect of Christian life is service performed faithfully and in a proper spirit.

What is evidently wanting, therefore, is not so much new organisations and new methods of working, but the faithful use and greater development of means already in existence. And our idea is that every one having membership with the Church should work in one way or other. All cannot work in the same sphere, neither is it necessary or desirable they should; yet all may work in some department. God has given to all a talent or talents. The man of one talent has his own particular place to fill in the operations of the Church, as well as the man of five or ten talents. And that God who has given gifts has been careful to supply a sphere for their exercise. The Christian is a tree, a tree of righteousness; trees produce fruit, not for themselves but others. As Christians, we are bound to live for the glory of God and the good of men in some way. We may not have ten talents, but that is no good reason why we should not employ the five or two or one we possess. Do not stay to count the number of talents you have; you have work to do, go and do that. It is the duty of some to enter the Christian ministry, and to preach the everlasting Gospel. It is the duty of others to become lay missionaries, and labour in villages or in the slums and alleys of large towns, because

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peculiarly fitted for it. It is the duty of some to teach and train the young. It is the duty of others to hold meetings for prayer and religious exhortation in cottages or in the open air. It is the duty of some, who feel incapable of anything else, to invite people to the house of God, and endeavour to bring their neighbours and relations under the ministry of the Word. What a mighty moral transformation would pass over the face of the community were all Christians in their proper place, and doing their proper work! Everything is admirable in the Divine arrangement to secure the success and prosperity of the Christian Church. (Ephesians iv. 11, 12.) God has given prophets, apostles, evangelists,—given different orders of labourers, and differently gifted the same order, to carry on and complete His great work in the world. There were the twelve ordained by Christ to the apostleship, the seventy sent out two and two as evangelists, the deacons and deaconesses. And if these distinct and different orders were originally given to do God's work, why not now maintain and preserve them? They are all required by the necessities of God's work to-day. And we think that Church comes nearest to the Divine mind which makes all its talents, resources, and energies available for Christian aggression; and those members most glorify Him who contentedly occupy their proper place and continually toil for Him. If you cannot preach in the pulpit, teach in the Sabbath-school. If you cannot translate the Scriptures, or write elaborate annotations, circulate them. If you cannot make speeches and deliver lectures, visit the sick and dying and destitute around you. If you cannot write tracts and make books, recommend and distribute them. If you cannot eloquently defend the faith in public, do it in private. If you cannot popularly explain Christianity, reprove sin in your neighbours and friends with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. If you cannot go abroad as missionaries, col-

lect for them and pray for them. If you cannot give your thousands, give what you have got; or if you cannot give any money contribution, then give your sympathy, your prayers, your faith, your tears. If you cannot be the head or the eye or the ear, then be the hand or the foot; and with such talent and energy as God gives you, help on the triumphs of the Cross. Let Christianity be dearer to you than place or power or name in the Church; and let your work for Christ be its own sweetest and grandest reward, infinitely thankful that He permits you in any humble degree to glorify Him.

Every individual Christian Church must, not only contain within itself an organised society for spreading Christian light and intelligence among the distant nations, but must actually become missionary in all its operations. The whole aim and purpose of every separate Christian Church must be to evangelise mankind; solely and supremely to save souls from death and hide multitudes of sins; taking in its embrace every fallen son of Adam, caring both for home and foreign missions. What the home Churches have done for the heathen abroad has kept such Churches from dying of sheer inactivity. But the home Churches have not been sufficiently alive to home evangelisation. People at our doors, within reach of inexpensive effort, are dying for lack of knowledge; and what are we doing to save them? Death is doing its work, Satan is doing his work, sin is spreading woe everywhere; and what is the Church doing all the while? It is easy to talk about Christian aggression with folded arms, easy to express a wish to see the Church in prosperity, easy to pray now and then for God to quicken His people. But what becomes of all this apart from the use of the means, apart from earnest, judicious, and continuous activity? The Church is like Lazarus, quickened into life, but with grave clothes on: we must loose her and let her go on her

grand mission. While faithful to our own spiritual interests, we must not be less faithful to the spiritual interests of our fellows. They have claims upon our sympathies, prayers, and efforts. And the charity of the Gospel 'seeketh not her own.' Selfishness has no existence in pure Christianity. The love of the Gospel largely lives for the good of others. Think, then, what you may do, and ought to do for the perishing around you by your consecrated lives and labours. You may lessen moral misery, heal the broken-hearted, snap the chains of the spiritual captive and bid him go free. You may light up a heavenly smile in many a sad countenance, pour the oil of gladness into many a disconsolate spirit, and inspire the despairing with a hope of glory. While there remains a tear to dry, a fear to chase away, a sorrow to assuage; while there remains a wanderer unreclaimed, a sinner unconverted, a believer unsanctified to the fullest extent; while there remains anywhere or in any one, in any shape or form, opposition to Christ,—let us energetically spread Christianity, as the one absolute remedy for the woes and errors of the race. 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand'; and if the seed does not spring up and grow at once, go on sowing, assured of ultimate success.

There must be a prudent courage in the execution of plans. We do not mean that the Church is to employ irregular means and wild methods of extending Christianity. One prime qualification required by the Church of to-day is wisdom. There may be zeal, but not according to knowledge, and Church workers may do more harm than good. We need some knowledge of human nature, and a kind of intuitive perception when it is fitting and proper to do things. The work of God is hindered for want of thought as well as want of heart. Think of foolish church and chapel building, leaving the cause

feeble and crippled for years, when a little good judgment would have saved all this. There are instances in which it would have been a good thing for the Church if thousands of pounds had been thrown into the sea instead of expended as they were. Think of the unwise and singular ways of working on the part of some Christians. Fitful, irregular, ill-judged, and never to be depended on. In all these ways there is what we may call religious waste, a waste of money, energy, time, strength, and most blessed opportunities that sometimes only come once or twice in a generation. So while God's people keep a warm heart, and are everywhere missionaries of the Cross, ready to take advantage of all circumstances to exalt God and save men, they must seek a wise and enlightened judgment.

And in all the means we employ to extend the Redeemer's kingdom we must seek the aid of the Holy Spirit. He is the agent of redemption, and reproves of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; convinces the world of sinners by strict proof and demonstration; convicts the individual sinner in his judgment and conscience, and reproves and rebukes him because of sin. And the Holy Spirit convinces the world of the righteousness of Jesus, as well as shows that the sinner can only become righteous through Christ, giving the most transparent proof that He is the holy One of God. The Holy Spirit convinces of judgment; and the effect of the full manifestation of Jesus by the Spirit will be the complete defeat, dethronement, and condemnation of Satan and the subjects of his kingdom. This will be a progressive judgment, like the progressiveness of Christianity. Every sinner converted, every Church planted on heathen territory, every enlargement of Zion, is the judgment and condemnation of the devil and his agents; so that we absolutely need the Holy Spirit in all our work for the glory of God and the good of the race. There may be money, there may be talent, there may be

the most perfect Church organisation, there may be genius and scholarship, there may be all that man can supply; but the Church is perfectly powerless in all her working without the Holy Spirit. The locomotive engine may be beautifully fitted up and complete, but it cannot go without the steam; the vessel may have taken in her cargo, and have all her sails spread, but cannot go without the wind: so we are dependent on the grace of the Spirit for success in the Church and work of Jesus. We need the Holy Spirit to do His blessed work upon the Church and the world; to baptize the Church, so that the Church will be moved in holy sympathy and intense activity to seek the conversion of the world; and we want the Holy Spirit to be poured upon the world of thoughtless, irreligious men, moving upon their hearts and consciences, leading them to see and feel their guilt and danger, and to inquire what they must do to be saved: the one spiritual force acting upon the Church, and the other spiritual force acting upon the world; and these two mighty spiritual forces gradually getting nearer and nearer together, like two electric clouds, till the two spiritual forces meet and mingle, accomplishing in their combination the destruction of the works of the devil and the regeneration of humanity.

Chapter VI.

THE DENUNCIATION OF THE INDIFFERENT.

IN clear, strong language the indifferent are condemned and reprobated in the Bible. 'Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.' (Judges v. 23.) Properly speaking, the cause of ancient Israel was the cause of God. By refusing to aid the Israelites the help was refused to God Himself. The war with the Canaanites was made by God's command, for God's glory, and had God's prospering blessing. Had not God commanded the war, nothing could have justified the attack upon the Canaanites; for offensive warfare for the glory of the national arms, the love of power, the lust of territory, or the gratification of sentiments of private or public revenge we regard as unlawful and wicked. But God ordered the attack upon the Canaanites; and the light in which we ought to look upon the whole affair is this: God, as the supreme proprietor of all lands, had a right to punish the Canaanites for their obstinate idolatries, and to choose His own method of doing this. By the victories of the Israelites God intended to show that the gods of the heathen were 'lying vanities,' and that the God of Israel was 'God alone,'—the only legitimate object of supreme trust, love, and worship. Rightly considered, the cause of Israel was the cause of truth as against error, true worship as against idolatry, and a Divine religion as against superstition and sin. Had the Israelites lost the battle, it would

have been taken as a triumph of the gods of the Canaanites over the God of Israel, and so confirmed the Canaanites in all the fearful abominations of their heathen practices. God, therefore, not only commanded the war, but fought for Israel. The poetic putting of the fact is this: 'The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.' That is, the very elements of nature were at war with the Canaanites. Their general could not see the stars, and so determine his position; and the heavy rains which hid the heavenly bodies from view caused the river to rise, which swept away his troops, and in the confusion became the instrument of their defeat. See how all this illustrates the dealings of God in the present day, and in every age since then in carrying on His cause! By nature, earthquake, famine, and volcanic eruptions; by providential circumstances of all sorts in nations, Churches, and families; by science and literature in their multiplied and ever varying forms; by inventions and discoveries in every sphere of life and labour; by the very passions of men and the ambition of empires;—God gives victories to the Church, and shows His complete and universal control over all nature still. To armies He says, 'Hitherto shall ye go, but no farther'; and armies as well as nature proclaim Him supreme and universal Governor. The present is the reproduction of the past; the modes and forms may vary, but the substance is there. God is seen in the deeds of to-day as well as in the events and circumstances of by-past ages.

The inhabitants of the village of Meroz, which lay in the path of the Israelites, might have greatly assisted the Israelites, but they were culpably indifferent amid the most stirring events and the most glorious opportunities of rendering aid to the hosts of God. God took the refusal to help in the war as a refusal to Himself personally. 'They came not to the *help of the Lord*,' is the pointed and emphatic language. In this lies their guilt and condemna-

tion. So refusing to aid God's Church in the conquest of heathendom to-day at home and abroad, you refuse aid to God Himself. He takes what is done for His cause and people as so much service rendered to Him personally. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.' This is the principle involved in the case, and shows that God was not cruel and vindictive, delighting in slaughter and bloodshed, but justly concerned for His character and government, and concerned also for the best and highest welfare of His people. Thus in olden times, as also to-day, He occasionally chastised communities by the sword as well as by earthquake and pestilence and famine. And if it must be so, if we persist in our opposition to the truth and government of God, if we will not act otherwise, but go on in the most irrational and evil ways, God has no alternative left, and 'by terrible things in righteousness' He is still compelled to answer the prayers of the Church.

To be indifferent to Christian aggression is to be indifferent to God's command. Just as God commanded the Israelites to attack the Canaanites in the days of old, He commands His Israel to attack the Canaanites of to-day, the heathen of every land, 'the enemies of the Cross of Christ' scattered over the face of the habitable globe: not with the sword of secular power, but with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The enemies are numerous, but not invincible; their fortifications are formidable, but not impregnable; and greater is He who is for us than all who are or can be against us. It may sometimes seem impossible to succeed in the glorious enterprise of the Cross when we look at the gigantic systems of heathenism; but we have really nothing to do with the possibility or impossibility of the thing properly considered: we have simply to obey orders, to carry out God's clear command to go and fight for Him, and not coldly and dis-

honourably remain neutral, like the inhabitants of Meroz. Good wishes and fitful sympathy will not avail in the Church of Jesus; nothing but hard effort, unceasing work, stern and determined fighting against sin and the devil, —fighting as if the success of the battle depended on us personally. In this spirit every soldier of the Cross must proceed to the fight, and with this spirit and aim every soldier must continue the fight till the Captain of our salvation permits us to put off our armour. It is a disgrace ten thousand times worse than death to be indifferent, a dishonour we can never wipe out with tears, to desert our post of duty, to retreat before the enemy, or to be idle and unemployed while others are waging war to the death with evil.

To be indifferent to Christian aggression is to manifest indifference to the need of the nations. It is to be indifferent to the world's physical necessity. Think of all the physical inconvenience and suffering that might be removed by Christian civilisation. Think of all the preventable disease, and the untold misery which might be annihilated. Think of the unnecessary pain inflicted by native doctors in barbarous lands, where the cure is often infinitely worse than the disease, and where the surgical operation is worse than the accident itself. It is to be also indifferent to the mental need of mankind. God has given intellect for culture and use. We have in Christendom a glorious literature and a glorious science, and yet if we neglect to take our proper part in the world's evangelisation we indifferently keep from the peoples and tribes of the earth this beneficent mental light. It is to be further and especially indifferent to the moral and spiritual need of the race, if we be indifferent to the spread and propagation of Christianity. Multitudes are in darkness at home and abroad, in deep, painful, and increasing darkness. They want the light, and are groping for it, but, unguided, wander farther and

farther out of the way. Yet men, calling themselves Christians, are profoundly indifferent to all the woes and miseries of the soul consciously estranged from God, and are doing nothing to remove the pangs of conscience under guilty fear and searching for pardon and peace.

To be indifferent to Christian aggression is to show indifference to the glory and honour of God. The world's evangelisation is for the glory of God as well as by the command of God. The Church is, under God, to save and convert the world. For this purpose she has given to her the revealed truth of God, the Holy Spirit, and glorious means and opportunities. The Church must put down and destroy for ever all evil and idolatry of every sort,—whether it be the worship of wealth, or the worship of social status, or the worship of pleasure, or the worship of intellect, or the worship of some god of wood or stone,—it must be completely demolished because it is an intolerable insult to God. All idolatry is an invasion of the crown rights of Jehovah, a direct and daring attack upon the Divine sovereignty. God says: 'All souls are Mine.' He is 'the Father of the spirits of all flesh.' He has, not only created and preserved the race, but redeemed it by the blood of His Son. The Saviour 'tasted death for every man.' So that God has every conceivable right to the nations of men: by creative goodness, preserving grace, and redeeming love. He especially claims the world on the basis of redemption; it is His blood-bought property. Hence He has an exclusive and inalienable claim on the faith, love, obedience, worship, and service of mankind. But all heathenism, at home and abroad, ignores the rights of God, neglects His worship, and curses with a tenfold curse the families and communities of men. And the wonder is, how God's own people, for whom He has done so much, can be indifferent to the fearful insults heaped upon the majesty and government of God by idolatry of every type! We protect the honour of our friends, we

vindicate the glory of our country, we are especially concerned for the good name of our own particular families; but we indifferently permit the 'name above every name,' the three-one God, to be treated as if He might be politely or rudely bowed out of the universe, just as if He were a mere pretender and not our rightful Lord. We need not wonder that the wicked act in this way; but when men calling themselves Christians do it in all sorts of ways and under all sorts of names, by tacit consent, by open deed, by guilty silence, by avowed connection with certain parties in and out of the Church, the singular moral outrage seems passing belief. And yet it is so. Men who are the constituted guardians of the honour and glory of God allow His name to be blasphemed, His rights to be trampled on, and His ordinances disregarded without compunction or concern; and by this they bring upon themselves the displeasure and condemnation of God.

Many Christians are living in known and admitted indifference to the claims of God and man, living in grievous neglect of themselves and others. Instead of living for the glory of God and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, they are living for lower and unworthy objects. Some are mainly living to make money, as if to amass a great fortune were everything here; whereas it is impossible to say whether great wealth will not be a greater curse than blessing to themselves and their offspring. Some are living for pleasure, as if it could impart complete satisfaction to the soul of man; whereas the mere luxuries and enjoyments of life enfeeble character, and make the soul miserable by turning people from the true end of existence. Some are living for worldly position, place, and power, as if worldly fame were enough for immortal men; whereas the soul needs God, and work for God in order to meet and fill its vast capacities. Some, alas! are living for anything and everything rather than the end for which they were created,

redeemed, and regenerated. This brings leanness into the soul, a feebleness of piety that only just lives from week to week, and ultimately these worldly-minded Christians mostly become backsliders in heart and life. In fact, they are frequently this before they separate themselves from visible and formal connection with the Church of Christ, just as the prodigal, in the parable, was a prodigal before he left his father's house and went into the far country.

You see, then, the justice of the terrible denunciation of Scripture against indifference to Christian aggression. It is indifference to God's will and arrangement in the economy of grace. He has ordained that man shall save his fellow man, save him instrumentally: and we have no case on record of any man being saved without the efforts of Christian people in some form or other. It is indifference to God's express command. He has said: 'Go work to-day in My vineyard.' He has given us clear and definite instructions what we are to do for others, and how we are to do it. It is indifference to God's glory and honour. It is for the Divine glory that Christianity should be spread and become universally triumphant by the agency of the Church. But indifference hinders the Gospel and diminishes God's glory. It is indifference to the wants of the world and the claims of the race. They are ignorant, and we are to instruct them; they are dark, and we are to take them the light; they are lost, and we are to do all in our power to save them by the grace of God; they are intensely miserable, and we are to impart to them the lofty joys of Christianity. And for God to condemn and reprobate the neglect of known duty is consistent and right. It is precisely the sort of thing men themselves are daily doing in every department of life and labour; the denunciation of the indifferent is a principle operating in society generally. Let a father neglect his wife and family, and the whole community joins in the condemnation of the man; as

people read the reports of such cases in the newspapers, there is a universal cry of shame. Let a vessel be wrecked, and all on board be in danger of perishing, while within reach of aid, but a little way off are some selfish, inhuman wretches watching the sinking vessel, and only thinking of the splendid opportunity afforded them of seizing what they can of the ship's treasures: everybody hearing of the circumstance pronounces the cold-hearted men unfit for society, while they commend the conduct of the brave, generous men who man our lifeboats to save the perishing. Let a house be on fire, and the parents and their little ones crying for help from the windows of the upper rooms, and some big, strong men close by mocking their misery without lifting a hand to extinguish the fire and to afford relief to the sufferers: the country hearing of the heartless neglect of these men would ring with execrations from end to end. Yet this is precisely what some are doing spiritually who call themselves Christians, and have membership with the Church of Jesus. And as society condemns indifference to the temporal well-being of the community, the Bible condemns and denounces indifference to the loftier and more momentous interests of our fellow men. Just as magazines and newspapers and reviews hold up inhumanity to reprobation, so the Christian Scriptures censure the indifference and spiritual inactivity in which multitudes indulge while thousands are perishing for lack of knowledge at their own door and in the distant nations. Yes; and the condemnation is as just in the one case as in the other. Nay; is it not infinitely more so? as the interests of the soul infinitely exceed the interests of the body. When by cold neglect there is the sacrificing of natural life, and that for a few months or years, as the case may be, it is something; especially when widows and orphans are thrown upon the care of society: but it is nothing to sacrificing the soul for ever through lack of sympathy and effort on our part.

which, remember, we were bound to manifest as the disciples of Jesus. What emphasis of condemnation, what crushing bitterness of denunciation, does our indifference call for while we act thus in the Christian Church!

When Cain slew Abel, and by that act outraged every sentiment of humanity, and then wanted to ignore his responsibility, 'the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel, thy brother?' And Cain turned round on God, and said, 'I know not: am I my brother's keeper?' Is it any concern of mine? what have I to do with him? am I the guardian of his rights, the protector and promoter of his interests? is it not enough for me to take care of myself, to look after my own welfare in a world of struggle and conflict like this? hast Thou imposed on me the burden and responsibility of my fellows? God met this by a direct affirmative. 'What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.' (Genesis iv. 9, 10.) And as Cain was held responsible for his conduct, and cursed and condemned for his guilt, it is precisely so in relation to the Christian men of to-day when guilty of unchristian conduct. The blood of murdered souls cries to God against us, and we are charged with guilty neglect, while our own brothers are sinking into everlasting perdition. To take away natural life is a fearful crime in the estimation of the community; but what of the infinitely blacker crime of slaying the souls of our brother men by cold indifference and spiritual neglect? And from this terrible sin who among us is altogether free? Such conduct must be visited with Divine displeasure and ultimate punishment unless repented of and forgiven.

Christ tells us of a man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and somewhere on his journey the man fell among thieves, who stripped him, wounded him, and left

him half dead. And there the man lay in his helplessness and blood, and must have died altogether had no one rendered him kindly assistance. But the aid did not come from the most likely persons. It so happened that a certain priest came down that way, who ought, from his character and office, to have been benevolently disposed and ready to assist the poor, half-dead traveller. But when the priest saw the wounded man, and probably conjectured that the case would be troublesome and expensive, he coldly 'passed by on the other side,' and allowed mere looking on and a little hollow, inexpensive pity to suffice. 'And, likewise, a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on' the poor, unfortunate man, but did nothing, and, like the priest, 'passed by on the other side.' And not a Jew, but one of the hated race, a despised Samaritan, helped the wounded and half-killed Jew who had 'fallen among thieves.' Is this not true to experience in the present age? We who ought to be doing most for our countrymen and our race are profoundly indifferent to their highest welfare. When we come to the very place where our neighbours and our very brothers are lying in their moral degradation and helplessness, we pass by on the other side, too, and do not even step across the way to look at them in many instances, for fear we should feel compelled for very shame to aid them. The Saviour rebukes our conduct, and reserves His compliments for others we had despised and looked down upon in our fancied superiority. It seems hard He should condemn His own people, but from His very character and government He is compelled to denounce the indifferent and unprofitable servant. He cannot approve, but must reprobate the neglect of duty.

The same truth is taught us by the parable of the servants. (Luke xii. 35—48.) In common life, servants are held responsible for things confided to them; so it is with the servants of God. Fidelity and wisdom are to be com-

bined in us; zeal and prudence and energy must always characterise our conduct. Unspeakable will be the blessedness of those servants whom, when the Lord cometh, He shall find watching and waiting at the post of duty. They will gain approval and reward, and will be promoted to a higher place in the service of the Master. But if the servant turns unfaithful, neglects duty, and trifles with his responsibility, he will be visited with overwhelming condemnation, with the most terrible Divine chastisement, with inconceivable punishment in everlasting perdition. If he says in his heart, 'My Lord delayeth His coming; and shall begin to beat the men servants and maidens, and to eat and drink and be drunken: the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him; and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him off, and will appoint him his portion with unbelievers.' The unchangeable law on which the great Master invariably acts is distinctly stated, 'For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.' Hence those who have great talents, privileges, and opportunities, and are intelligently acquainted with the will of the Master, but are indifferent to the discharge of duty, 'shall be beaten with many stripes.' It must be so; God must carry out His government. And so the Divine rebuke comes again and again to the unfaithful servant during his earthly life, 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' 'thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers'; 'could ye not watch with Me one hour?' But when the final reckoning comes, it will be said, 'Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' And it is enough to make a man gnash his teeth,—the loss of such a blessed and glorious immortality.

Jesus pleaded with His disciples to be faithful to Him and to His cause; and when they slept instead of watching He sorrowfully upbraided them for their want of sympathy

and attention. His 'soul was sorrowful and very heavy'; His mental agony was such as made Him feel as if He would die before He came to the cross; and He told it frankly to the disciples, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' I feel as if I could not endure any longer. The burden of grief and anguish presses down my soul so greatly, that I feel as if I should die under it. 'Tarry ye here, and watch with Me.' He then went a little away from them, and prayed to the Father to permit the cup of suffering to pass from Him, if the race could otherwise be redeemed. And when He returned to the disciples, He found them sleeping: sleeping when the Master was heart-broken with the deepest sorrow; sleeping when He had requested that they would watch with Him, and show Him some sympathy and affection under the most painful circumstances possible; sleeping when they ought to have been praying, like Christ, that the Father would strengthen them for the terrible scene of sorrow and suffering through which they were about to pass. 'He said to Peter, What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?' Couldst not thou, Peter, who didst so lately boast of thy courage and constancy in My service, declaring that thou wouldest sooner die than be faithless? *'So likewise said all the disciples.'* Could not ye watch with Me, James and John, who so recently joined Peter and the rest of the eleven in the declaration of fidelity? Am I to be deserted of all in My great sorrow, and, unsoothed by human sympathy, to pass alone through this terrible crisis? Could ye not watch with Me one hour under these circumstances, especially when I particularly requested the favour at your hands. It is not much you can do for Me now; but might you not have done this, and let Me feel that I was not absolutely deserted in My great conflict? A second and a third time He came, and found them still sleeping. Then came the memorable words, 'Sleep on now, and take your rest.' It is all over; you

cannot save Me now, if you would. 'Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.' This is exactly what the disciples of to-day are doing in other forms. Remember, we are professedly identified with the cause of Christ, and must watch with Him by watching the interests of His Church. He is still in danger of being seized and crucified, crucified afresh, and put to an open shame. His false friends yet betray Him with a kiss, by betraying His holy cause. His open enemies seek His ruin and overthrow by seeking the ruin and overthrow of His Church. He has committed the interests of Christianity into our hands, and asks us to watch with Him during the one short hour of human life. He has already excused much. But it sorely grieves Him to find us repeating the same offences time after time. He complains gently and repeatedly. The 'sleep on now and take your rest' is delayed, but must come before long, unless we improve; and, oh! the bitter regret to find the last opportunity of toil gone, and the imperfect past unimprovable for ever.

There is one passage in the New Testament which has made many a godly man wince, and sent him to do work he never would have done. 'Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin' (James iv. 17); that is, knowing to do good, as the revealed will of God, according to our ability and opportunity. There is clearly something for all Christians to do. We are not left to conjecture this from nature or reason or the pleasure we find in doing good; the thing is definitely stated in Scripture. Ability and opportunity are the measure of responsibility; we are none of us responsible for gifts and opportunities we never had. But 'knowing to do good and not doing it,' locking up our sympathies and locking up our efforts, 'is sin': sin against God, the transgression of His law, an unauthorised interference with His published arrangements for the guidance of His Church and people. He wills that

we shall work for His glory and the good of men. All His doings in nature, providence, and redemption proceed upon the principle that we are to become and continue 'workers together with Him.' And sinning against God we sin against society, we sin against the Church, we sin against ourselves by dwarfing our soul and intellect, and we are guilty of sin that must ultimately be punished. God, as a just and righteous Being, cannot allow it to pass without rebuke and condemnation. Is there not a sense in which our wrong doing is always punished. Supposing we are pardoned and get to heaven, it will never be the glorious heaven it would have been had we never yielded to indifference and neglected duty: just as the flower nipped by the frost is never the flower it would have been, though it survives the blighting. Should not the thought of all this stir us up to duty? Not only for the sake of the Saviour, for the sake of the community, for the sake of the Church, but even for the sake of the beneficial influence of Christian toil on our mind and heart, and also on our everlasting destiny, should we not always be up and doing, lest we suffer loss in heaven by occupying some lower place than we might have had, and lest God come and smite us with a curse—cursing us with feebleness and misery of soul now, or with exclusion from His presence and glory in eternity?

Chapter VII.

THE REWARD OF THE TRUE WORKER.

THERE are many motives which should lead Christian people to work for God: the world's necessity, the world's redemption, the Saviour's command, and the everlasting consequences of their work, both with reference to themselves and others, for this life and the life which is to come. These are powerful incentives to Christian toil, if there were no other; and if these of themselves do not influence you in the right direction, we hardly know what will, and almost despair of the power of every other consideration. The world is perishing; it is for Christian men and women to save it: the world is redeemed; it is for Christian men and women to publish this glorious intelligence everywhere. The Saviour requires you to do this from deep, strong, pure, enthusiastic love to Him, and from genuine and universal love to your fellows.

But to encourage and sweeten your toil He says, if you only work for Him in the right way and from proper motives, you shall have your reward both here and hereafter. To a large extent you will have it in this life. While blessing others you will yourselves be wonderfully blest. If a man want to be thoroughly happy, he must endeavour to make somebody else happy. This is at once the law of your being and the law of your Christianity. God has so ordained and constituted things in His kingdom of grace, that what you do for Him and for others comes flowing back in multiplied blessing into your own soul. You have even now, in the shape of present spiritual

interest, 'a hundredfold,' with the grand prospect of life everlasting in the world to come. 'Your labour,' then, 'is not in vain in the Lord' for this life, if there were no other to follow. No man can do good with a right heart, and not feel the luxury and blessedness of it. And if there were no other heaven for the true worker in God's vineyard, the present heaven which doing good invariably creates in a large, generous, noble soul, would of itself constitute a sufficient and ample reward. We say, were there no other heaven, this would be worth the having, and far more than compensate us for the poor, feeble efforts we put forth in God's service, and the small sacrifices we make in working for Christ. The Lord pays as we proceed, pays present wages, if we may dare to look at it in a commercial aspect, which is certainly not the highest. In a certain well understood sense the Lord is no man's debtor for an hour. The joy that flows so abundantly into the heart of the Christian, whenever he is truly and zealously affected in God's good cause, is so pure, so thoroughly genuine, so lofty and exquisite, that it might very well be the envy of the angels. We are so made that we cannot do a right deed, or perform a noble act, without the approval of conscience. An enlightened understanding and an enlightened conscience sanction and approve all true Christian work. And to have the sense, the blessed consciousness of doing what God ordains and smiles upon, is itself a reward not to be lightly esteemed but intensely desired, however certain writers of the present day may contemptuously sneer at 'a few miserable pleasures of virtue.' Those authors who have more sympathy with Pantheism than Christianity, and never felt the nobleness of strictly religious work in its earnest and aggressive forms, are not the best judges in a matter of this nature. Such men form opinions apart from experience. And yet we should naturally think, on the very face of it, that the work of making the drunkard

sober, the fornicator chaste, the thief honest, the malignant loving, and the ungodlike godly, is surely doing something in a world like this to make a man feel justly proud and happy, if he has only a spark of moral nobleness left in his heart. If such work does not give sincere and exalted pleasure to the mind, it must be because it is unrenewed, and, in its present evil state, incapable of fully seeing and appreciating spiritual excellence. But however this may be, we know it as a fact of experience, that to every truly Christian soul such work does somehow or other bring a heaven of delight. And so we say again, if there were no other heaven to follow, verily such toilers in the Church and vineyard of the Redeemer *'have their reward.'*

But some people say it is a mere mercenary principle to expect a reward for service rendered in the cause of Christ. They tell us we ought to work for God from the love of it, because the thing is right in itself, and that all expectation of reward should be excluded from the mind. We readily grant that what is right should be done from the love of right, that virtue should be loved for its own excellence, and that God should be loved and obeyed because He is the highest and best of beings. But we do not see when we have admitted this, that we go beyond the line of reason or revelation in hoping to realise the reward of virtuous conduct and Christian labour. Has not God voluntarily engaged to reward us if we faithfully discharge the duties devolving upon us? Has He not promised such reward that He may gradually educate us up to the highest standard of virtue? This is the very principle adopted in human affairs, as we see in the rewards given to children at school, to youths at college, to servants by their masters and mistresses, to soldiers by their king and country. On this principle ministers of state are rewarded by peerages, titles and estates are professedly granted, and the attainment of superior excellence in

philosophy and literature is rewarded by diplomas from our universities,—all to encourage effort for the welfare of the nation and the race. This very principle is taken up into Christianity and sanctified to high and sacred uses. Rewards are granted by God to His servants to lead them on from the lowest to the highest character and service. Since, therefore, God has condescended to promise rewards to His faithful people, may we not reasonably anticipate the fulfilment of such promises without the charge of selfishness? Would it not be perfectly marvellous for men in the nineteenth century of Christianity, with a complete and open Bible before them, to overlook the numerous promises of Almighty God under the fancy that virtue is its own and only reward; or that the love of truth itself, and the joy felt in spreading righteousness, will constitute our exclusive blessedness? Christian labour is undoubtedly rewardable according to the teaching of Scripture, but not in any way meritorious. The reward in every instance is of grace, not of merit; it is the gift, the donation of God. ‘The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ God will reward the righteous on account of their works; nay, because of their works, in proportion to their works, and according to their devoted, consistent, godly living. It is, then, we conclude, an established Christian doctrine that piety and zeal will one day meet with their fitting recompence. It is not always so in this life, as the best deeds and the best men are frequently branded with the disapprobation of society, or a large section of it; but it will be so ‘at the resurrection of the just.’ ‘Verily, there is a reward for the righteous.’ ‘To him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.’ ‘And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.’ ‘Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not

in vain in the Lord.' These and numerous other clear and definite passages of Scripture settle the question, that all Christian efforts will be properly rewarded at last. Not as we said, because there is any merit in them, but because it is God's good pleasure and gracious engagement through Jesus to do this. The good will be ours, the glory God's.

It is very easy to get wrong in hoping for the rewards of heaven. If we serve Christ because we want to be paid, or because we fear to be punished, we occupy a low platform of service, though we are far from saying that God will not use these lower motives to raise us to something higher. It is nobler to serve from gratitude, faith, and love awakened in our heart by the goodness and exalted character of the Saviour, and to feel in our work that we would do it for the honour of Christ if He never dispensed a single reward from His generous hand. A full, loving heart pours itself forth in service, and this is the highest and strongest motive. To serve from love is more than to serve because we wish to be comfortable and happy. Does the mother try to save the life of her child when it is in danger because she wants to be happy or comfortable? It is because her whole mother's heart goes out in love to the child that she strains every nerve to rescue her child from destruction. It is her motherly nature to do this, her love to the babe is so deep and strong, so completely a part of herself, that it rises unbidden and spontaneous. It is as natural to her to love the child as it is to live and breathe. Now, we must get love like this in all our service for Christ. Who ever thinks of a reward for loving his wife, or loving his friend, or setting his son up in business? We feel that these are duties and privileges that are very largely their own reward. And we must try to carry these ideas and feelings into Christian service. Christ is nearer and dearer to us than wife or child or friend. No doubt God places the rewards of glory before us to train us to

serve Him from love and a spirit of self-sacrifice, as the child is brought on in his education by prizes and all sorts of encouragements, till he is led to love learning for its own sake, or till he begins to see for himself that it is the grand instrument of developing his faculties and putting him in possession of lofty truths and principles. Nor should we forget that the rewards of God are very largely rewards in kind. Faith for faith, purity for purity, love for love, power for power. In this deep sense we are even now rewarded 'according to our works'; that is, we get a further and higher development of the same nature, as well as a reward in proportion to our work. And carrying this idea up to the life of heaven, we see the reward of glory will be the perfection of holiness, and consequently the perfection of blessedness. It is a law of Christianity, universally applying in this life, and greatly influencing the other life, 'to him that hath shall be given.' He who uses wisely and well what God now bestows shall have more grace, more faith, more purity, more love, more spiritual power; and then, as the outcome and result of this personal religious increase in gifts and graces from their faithful and diligent use, he will have a proportionate augmentation of everlasting glory.

Beside the reward in kind here, there will also be the reward of joy over success. Men die, but all right effort lives. We may not often be able to trace a particular effect back to a particular cause. We may seldom see the good we do, and never in all its fulness till the day of judgment. But we know that the influence of the past efforts of the Churches has accumulated into one vast power, so to speak, and made the Christendom of to-day the Christendom that it is. Individual effort, like the separate drops in the shower, has contributed to the grand result. Many labourers are required to secure the crowning result of agriculture,—an abundant crop of corn.

There is the man who ploughs the land, then the man who carts the manure, then the man who puts in the seed, then the man who harrows it in, then the man who weeds and hoes, and, finally, the man who cuts down the crop. And so the man who reaps cannot say the harvest is his. It belongs to all the men who took part in raising and gathering in the corn. Now it is so with the conversion of sinners and the prosperity of the Church. The success of the Gospel, properly understood, is the success of all good men and women; it belongs to all who pray and work and give, to all who in any way ever did anything aright for God and the race. The influence of such deeds is transmitted to posterity, generation after generation, and it can never die; and so all good people may very properly rejoice over the triumphs of Christianity, for that joy is part of the reward of their working for God. Others laboured before the Christians of to-day, and rejoiced over the extent to which they were enabled to push the conquests of the Cross; we have entered into their labours, and inherited the godly influences they created, and in turn we are permitted to rejoice over the amount of success we may secure by the blessing of God; and then we, too, 'shall rest, and stand in our lot at the end of the days'; the joy of earth will grow and swell into the joy of immortality.

But great as is the reward of the true worker for God on earth, it will be infinitely greater in heaven. As we intimated, the Christian has two heavens to reward his religious toil. There is first the blessed 'well done' in the testimony of his own conscience, which is a source of perpetual joy and satisfaction. Then there is the, 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' coming from the lips of the blessed Master at the judgment, and the welcome into glory, 'enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' Surely joy now and joy for ever should fire our hearts with devotion, and encourage us to enter with soul and might into the

work of God. People everywhere around us are thirsting for hollow applause, they daily feed upon empty fame, greedily drink in the praise of men. What, therefore, must be the sincere and gladdening public applause of Christ, who is unerring in His judgment, righteous in His utterances, and deeply interested in your welfare, when He says, before the intelligent universe, 'Well and faithfully done' ! But this is not all. You will have a public reception into glory. 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,' must mean that in some way and degree we shall witness and share in the joy of Jesus, partake of His blessedness. New Divine honours will be showered down upon us, new joys prepared for us, and we shall have awakened in our heart a gratifying sense of increased worth and fresh dignity. And this will bring new obligations of service to be rendered eternally. However, the increase of responsibility, the widening of personal influence, and the acquisition of new power in glory will all add to our abounding joy, our ever growing happiness through the everlasting ages. And it is God's method in the Bible to lead us on in Christian service by the splendid prospect of eternal promotion to high dignity and felicity in heaven for ever. Is not the same principle applied to Christ in the sacred Scriptures ? 'Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' The prospect of seeing sinners bowing at His feet, penitent, believing, and receiving pardon, holiness, and then entering glory ; the prospect of seeing nation after nation converted, and finally the whole world subjugated to His holy, beneficent authority,—was the joy set before the Saviour Himself, and it cheered, gladdened, and greatly comforted Him as He hung upon the cross, bleeding and dying for lost and erring humanity. So, as we have suffered with Him, had one drop of His sad cup, sympathised with Him in His redeeming work, and to some extent entered

into that work by our humble but sincere endeavours, we shall ultimately 'enter into His joy.' His triumph will be our triumph, and His joy will be our joy. Just as when some dear friend for whom you have spoken a kind word, and used what influence you legitimately could, has got the situation he sought, or succeeded in the business he entered upon, you feel so thoroughly one with the man that his success is your success and his joy is your joy. In this way we suppose we shall enter into Christ's joy, and be filled with it for evermore. And what an unspeakable joy in heaven if we be able to recognise any who can more clearly and especially trace their conversion to our individual exertions, who probably would never have got to heaven at all but for our personal services; if there be any such as 'the crown of our rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus,' it will be enough to make our blessedness complete. But as none who have in any way toiled for God will be forgotten, the sower and the reaper will rejoice together, and each will feel as if all heaven's joy were his own. Just as when we take a walk on a mild May morning, we feel as if all the sunlight were ours, as if all the beauty of the landscape were ours, as if all the music of the birds were ours, as if all the fragrance of the flowers were our own, to the exclusion of everybody else. So full and complete, so infinitely satisfactory will be your eternal reward; and it will be precisely so for every inhabitant of heaven. The workman feels an honest joy when his well-earned wages are put into his hand. The tradesman feels an honest joy when he succeeds in his business. The author feels an honest joy when his book is well received and useful. And the Christian feels a pure and lofty joy when he is successful in the vineyard of the Lord; and a still higher and purer joy when he rests from his toils and enters everlasting glory. No joy is comparable to the joy God gives to His devoted servants here and hereafter.

As to the exact nature of the reward, we honestly confess it baffles our conception and description. The negative aspect of the subject may be more or less obvious, but the positive side is unknown, and will remain unknown till we enter glory. There is cessation from labour, that is, not absolute cessation from service, but from the evils and drawbacks of earthly service; from the pain and weariness, the sorrow and anxiety, the imperfection and disappointments more or less attaching to all Christian labour on earth. There will be no mental or physical exhaustion. Here we are frequently tired in God's work, but not of it. This, however, will never occur in God's service in heaven. 'There remaineth a rest,' the keeping of a Sabbath, 'to the people of God.' The week's work of earth will be past, with all the painful conditions of labour; and so all the cares and perplexities of the work will be laid aside for ever. 'For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.' But though mental and physical and social suffering are for ever past, we shall for ever serve God, day and night, in His temple. And heaven would be no particular attraction, especially to earnest, lofty natures, if it were a state of luxurious idleness, of mental stagnation and spiritual inactivity. Pure, enthusiastic, laborious souls would be singularly out of their element in a heaven where there was nothing to do. But Divine revelation assures us that there will be full employment for every servant of God in glory: and the service of earth is intended to fit us for the service of immortality. However, the reward is mainly this, that we shall serve without imperfection or failure, without a single drawback or shortcoming through the everlasting ages. The pain of earth is, that we forget and fail and blunder in our work for God; the reward of heaven is, that we shall serve with conscious perfection amid 'fulness of joy,' with 'a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory' as to moral character,

as well as from the fuller manifestation of God. We shall be enthroned and crowned, and have given to us a kingdom. The throne will be perfectly stable, the crown will be one of life, and the kingdom will never be invaded and plundered by an enemy. We shall reap the full reward of working for God on earth, in elevated thought, feeling, character, and service. We shall enter the everlasting paradise and enjoy its beauty and blessedness, its sweet repose and unclouded sunshine, without inconvenience and weariness. But the reward is grander than poet ever sang, or painter ever pictured, or romancer ever dreamt of; than eye ever saw, or ear ever heard, or heart ever conceived. And when you think of complete freedom from sorrow and sin, from toil and trouble, from pain and death; when you think of the highest knowledge, the highest purity, the highest joy; when you think of the best society, the greatest and most abiding good; when you think of all that is desirable to make life complete, and unending existence perfectly blessed,—even then you have only the most distant conception of all that goes to make up the reward of the workers for God. But while the reverent and loving spirit dares not ask a thousand things about the nature of the blessedness of heaven, we are conscious of a soul within us which will know it all by experience when we have toiled for God a little longer.

If it be asked, On what principle will this great and glorious reward be granted? we see clearly enough that they that have done good will come forth to the resurrection of life, and will doubtless be rewarded in proportion to personal holiness and usefulness. ‘They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.’ The stars are not of equal magnitude and brilliancy; nor will the righteous be in glory. If we shine in God’s work on earth, we shall shine for ever in heaven; if we turn

many to righteousness by wisely and effectually spreading Christianity now, we shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. Clearly those who are just wise enough to take care of their own souls, but who do marvellously little for anybody else, will get to heaven, but will only 'shine as the brightness of the firmament,' in which there is nothing distinctive and individual; but they who turn many to righteousness, 'as the stars,' with an individuality all their own. The difference of eternity will be fixed by the difference of time. They who sow sparingly will reap sparingly, and they who sow plentifully will reap plentifully. The reward will partly be in proportion to service here, and the motives which prompted that service; not exactly the good we did, but the good we intended to do and tried to do. God will act with the greatest propriety, with the most perfect justice; and no servant will have any reasonable ground of complaint. Peter and Paul, Luther and Wesley will stand in their own place; and less pure and less laborious servants will occupy a lower platform. The men who have been most disinterested and zealous on earth will be the most conspicuous in heaven. All who have found Christ late in life and served Him sincerely will be perfectly happy according to position and capacity; but those who have served Christ longest and best will attain the highest degrees of blessedness. Those who have most cultivated intellect will have proportionately greater capacities of mind; those who have most cultivated communion with God will have proportionately sweeter communion with Him; and those who have been most faithful and diligent in Christian service on earth will be exalted to the most distinguished place in glory. Yet we ought not to think of these things in a selfish spirit, not about what we shall get and in what position we shall stand before God. There is something infinitely better than all this for strong and noble souls; and all this sort of thing is small compared

with the grand privilege of working for God in heaven, and the grand privilege of the work we may yet have on earth as the glorious preparation for the service of the skies. It is this which ought to engage our full and earnest attention. All else is secondary and subordinate. We may dismiss it as of comparatively little moment in the light of higher things, and listen with all our mind and heart to God's instruction to the wondering and perplexed Daniel: 'Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.' (Daniel xii. 13.) If we do our proper work, do it in the right spirit, do it thinking more of the work than the reward; and thinking more of the joy and reputation of the Saviour than of our own, God Himself will see to all the rest, and we may safely leave it in His hands. We shall in that case fill the place and do the service, not only on earth but in heaven itself, for which He created, redeemed, purified, and fitted us. And the right heart says, 'Lord, I am content to have it so; I will labour on till Thou dost say, It is enough, leave thy lowly earthly state and come up higher, serve in My immediate presence and glory through the everlasting ages.' 'Till the end be,' then, bravely and nobly toil on. Let efforts multiply as numerous and rapidly as seed multiplies. Increase and abound in the work of the Lord, like the waves of the sea when the tide is coming in, each successive wave pushing farther and farther upon the shore. And rest assured not a single motive or deed will be lost sight of by God, who will render to every man according to his work.

The only remaining question is the duration of the reward. You will be 'for ever with the Lord,' according to Paul, and according to the Saviour, you will 'enter into life eternal.' It is impossible to form any adequate conception of everlasting duration. All sorts of comparisons have been instituted to aid the finite mind, but they all

fail, and we are left at last with the abstract idea of ceaseless duration. Enough for us to know that the reward will be interminable. Whatever it is it will always be ours. Nations will pass away. The works of art will perish. The gorgeous palaces will fall and become common dust. All material things will change and decay, however valuable and beautiful. But our life in heaven will be endless and changeless, excepting from glory into glory, from one degree of bliss and grandeur to another in endless progress up toward God. And what the life of heaven will become in eternal ages it is impossible to say. We simply know two foundation facts,—it will stop short of the infinite, and it will never end. Beyond this we cannot go; nor should we perhaps desire.

Let us, in conclusion, urge you to greater Church work than you have hitherto attempted. As Christians, your principles should lead you to work for God. You believe in God, in the fall of man, in the redemption by Christ, in the immortality of the soul, in the possibility of being lost or saved for ever, and that man is the instrument of saving his fellow man. Now, if you really and truly believe all this, to be consistent, your very principles should impel you to work for God. Beside, you are the heirs of all the generations, and inherit the glorious spirit and example of the grand men of the past—Paul and Luther and Wesley, and ten thousand departed heroes whose biographies enrich the literature of the Church; and you ought to drink more fully into their spirit and tread more consistently in their footsteps. Beyond this, we live in stirring times, and events of the greatest moment are continually occurring. If the Church keep pace with the age, Christians must become increasingly energetic; if not, the agents of Satan will outstrip us in the race, and evil will swallow up the good. Let us gird ourselves for arduous enterprise, and show ourselves the worthy descen-

dants of the grand men of old. Our forefathers fought bravely and conquered, then went to their reward. Let us fill their vacant places, and enter into their labours. Angels will watch over you, good men will encourage you, God will guide and protect you, and finally heaven will open to receive you. Go and save the souls of your fellow men ; for to this great work God calls you, the Spirit prompts, Christ urges ; the world needs your utmost efforts, and the Church will thankfully accept your services. We envy not those who have talents to use, and do not use them ; who have blessings to bestow, and do not bestow them ; who might save souls from death, and do not save them ; we do not envy them in this world or the world to come. Christ says to every professing Christian, 'Go work to-day in My vineyard.' The day is brief and uncertain. You will soon have done with life, with the Church, and the world. Your opportunities of working for God will soon terminate, and terminate for ever here. Now you have a brief space for laying plans of usefulness and executing them ; but there is no such work in the grave. 'Why stand ye here all the day idle ?' God requires your work, and has every right to it. On your toil everlasting destinies depend. An infidel once said, 'You Christians don't believe your Christianity. If I believed as you profess and pretend to do, that Christianity is the only remedy for the woes and errors of the race, I'd go and tell it to everybody.' The conduct of Christians is very commonly a libel on Christianity. God wants you to carry on His cause in the world, He wants you to do this in a spirit and manner worthy of its infinite importance. He wants you to be blessed in the doing of it, and blessed for ever. By every possible motive and argument He appeals to you ; and shall His appeal be vain ? Shall the blessed Redeemer be dishonoured ? Shall immortal souls be allowed to perish without a strong effort to save them ? We have urged you to work in every way we

could, and by every conceivable reason. Shall human and Divine pleadings be to no purpose, so far as you are concerned? Will you not go alone, and before God ponder this question deeply, and on your knees pledge yourself to work in the best way you can? Such is the moral state of the world, and so very much depends on human effort, that everything seems to say to every Christian, Do something, do it speedily, and do it with all thy might. Oh that the love of God may make your feet swift to do it, make your heart strong to do it, and make your mind ready to do it! And when the devil tempts, when the world lures, when all seems dark and discouraging, think of Him who lived eighteen hundred years ago, amid disappointment, opposition, ingratitude, and apparent defeat, and yet amid it all held to His loving purpose unfalteringly: and go and do likewise. Even for its own sake, Christian work is glorious; the struggle against Satan and his host is noble and manly, and will do you good now, and an eternal reward will follow. 'He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.' The sowing time is now, the reaping by-and-by. Get sympathy with Christ in His great work. And if you have not great joy in apparent success, you will shortly have an eternity in which to be glad. Oh that God may help you in your Church work, and so influence every person associated with His people, that there may soon be a visible Church and no invisible member in it; that every Christian may be a missionary of grace and blessing wheresoever he may go, working as Christ did, and then going down to death saying, as Christ said, 'Father, I have glorified Thee on earth; I have finished the work Thou didst give Me to do'!

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